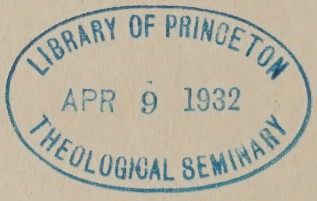

Division BT

Section 701

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1929

THE ADVENTURE OF BEING MAN

By the Same Author:

FRIENDSHIP
WORK
COMFORT
HAPPINESS
CULTURE AND RESTRAINT
THE OPEN DOOR
THE NEW WORLD
LEST WE FORGET
LISTENING TO GOD

THE ADVENTURE OF BEING MAN

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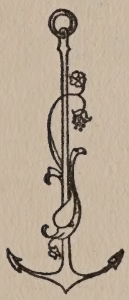
BY
HUGH BLACK



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1929

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FIRST EDITION

TO

I. S. B.

Preface

THIS book had its origin in the Raymond F. West Lectures at Stanford University. The Lectureship was founded by the parents of Raymond Frederick West, a student in Stanford University, who was drowned in Eel River, California, January 18, 1906, before the completion of his college course. The lectures are expected to be on some phase of the subject, "Immortality, Human Conduct, and Human Destiny."

I desired to keep the letter as well as the spirit of the Foundation, but I chose the specific title because my purpose was not an exhaustive statement of the doctrine of immortality, but a manner of approach to it which seems to me in line with a modern presentation of both science and religion.

The lectures were not written but were

delivered from notes. I was granted the privilege of writing the book later as I liked, but I have tried to recover the feeling of an audience and have sought to make the printed page as near to the spoken word as possible. That means avoiding technical terms and academic language.

I have to thank Stanford University for the courtesy allowed me of writing on the subject rather than printing the actual lectures.

HUGH BLACK.

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THE MAKING OF MAN

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can escape
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger, or of ape?
Man as yet is being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

All about him shadow still, but, while the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker. "It is finish'd. Man is made."

—TENNYSON.

I

THE ADVENTURE

I will not believe that it is given to man to have thoughts nobler and loftier than the real truth of things.

—Sir Oliver Lodge.

I

MY PURPOSE is to suggest a point of view, a way of looking at this mysterious universe and man's mysterious life. It means accustoming ourselves to think of the world from the point of view of adventure. By this I mean more than using the word as a metaphor. I mean more than the common fact that man has ever responded to the lure of adventure, the appeal to the unknown; that age after age we have followed the gleam. That is true, and useful to remember.

Human life has ever been like the venture of the sailor, who moves out from the shelter of the harbour to voyage to havens known and unknown. He looks to far horizons over wide waters. Joseph Conrad describes the lower reaches of the river Thames as "spread

out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth." One who has lived in such an estuary and has seen the stately ships sail out with their rich freightage to far lands and the islands of the sea naturally thinks of it as a symbol itself of human life. In youth the very word adventure thrills like a bugle call, and long after youth we dream of the adventure that may fill life with ecstasy.

My first knowledge of America came to me as a boy in Scotland from the stories of Fenimore Cooper. One of them was called *The Pathfinder,* of which I have little recollection except that it is a dull book; but the romantic figure of the Pathfinder remains in memory and imagination. It dates from the time when America was a land of flexible frontiers which could be pushed back; when the unknown and the unexplored lay beyond, and men needed pioneers with venturesome souls to blaze trails and chart new regions.

From the spacious days of Elizabeth almost till to-day Westward Ho! has meant adventure, calling for courage and hardihood and the gallant acceptance of risk.

It is often said in connection with the subject of immigration that restriction is needed, because America otherwise would be filled with the scum of Europe. That is contrary to the facts not only of history but of any knowledge of human nature. Restriction of some sort is wise for other reasons, but not because of the quality of the normal immigrant. In the violent tearing up of roots implied in immigration it requires courage and qualities that may develop into valuable moral assets to the new country. The "scum" stays at home. For example, I have investigated a district of Scotland and compared the residue with the young men who have gone to seek their fortune in Canada and Australia and the United States. On the whole the enterprising, the ambitious, the

adventurous had crossed the seas. In some cases there may have been a wildness of blood that created difficulties which made immigration attractive as a way of escape, but even that is often evidence of an adventurous spirit. The timid will rather bear the ills they have than take a chance which carries risk.

America is now past the days of shifting frontiers, but in the winning of the West there was the same call for pioneer virtues. All this has left its mark on American life, if not on American character. It is less under the domination of tradition and more open to new ideas and new ways of acting and thinking. A continent had to be possessed and exploited. We can see why the discoverer, the explorer, should be accepted as man's natural leader, finding new paths for others to follow.

There are limits to this in geography. A time comes when there are no new worlds to

discover, no more unexplored territory, no uncharted seas. But man's conquest of the world is intensive as well as extensive. So the word adventure is the key word to all progress. There is the adventure of advancing knowledge, of finding new truth, of adding to the sum of proved fact. The thrill of this will keep men to high tasks when no material prize would allure them. Enough if they can push forward the area of light even a painful inch; if they can make any worthy addition to the known.

The fact is that man has ever lived dangerously. It has been necessary sometimes to go on to the ragged edge of things, to attempt what looks impossible. All advance in knowledge has come through taking risks and leaving the well-trodden paths. "He was a brave man who first ate an oyster," said Swift. I suppose before the fact that oysters were edible became a part of common knowledge someone had to take a chance. Without

some intrepid, valorous souls, displaying audacity to the verge of rashness, the race would have stagnated and become extinct.

The adventure of life has not been wholly, and not even chiefly, a search for material things. It has been intellectual and moral. These adventures of action would have faded out without adventure of thought. The excitement of curiosity is responsible for every forward step. The pioneering instinct is not confined to geographical exploration. It sends man not only to Polar search, but also to weighing the stars. The triumphs of science have come through the eager, endless curiosity of the mind to grasp the secrets of the universe. There is a Latin saying that the mind tires of everything except to understand. This passion is the secret of science.

II

But my title suggests more than all that. It means that being man at all is an Adven-

ture. He is out on a pilgrimage of discovery. He has become man through endless adventure and is still in process of becoming man. He is making his world—a human world—and in that he himself is being made. It may be even that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

The greatest intellectual revolution possible to most of us would be to stop thinking of the world in terms of *statics* and begin thinking of it in terms of *dynamics*. We naturally think of the world as a more or less finished product. It is no doubt immense and has a very large number of things in it, but if we had time and sufficient help we could cover all the ground and catalogue everything as in a museum—and the sum total of all that would be the real world. Whatever the world may be, it is of all the figures we can describe or imagine the least like a museum, where everything has its convenient place and neat label.

In my college days chemists had analyzed matter to the atom, which we thought of as almost infinitely small but as a rigid inert something that could not be further resolved. It was like an invisible bullet, and solid mass was built up from these innumerable bullets. Now our modern physicists have analyzed that atom to electrons, and matter is no longer thought of as rigid mass. All investigation and speculation start blandly on the assumption that the very constitution of matter is electrical. The solid, stable mass has faded away to forms of some sort of force. In all the universe there is nothing rigid and stationary.

It is no wonder that our habit of viewing things as static is almost incurable; for the other conception is comparatively new. It is so recent that the very word dynamic, now in such common use, was invented by my own teacher of science, Lord Kelvin. I remember him telling us how he was hampered by lack

of a word to express some of his investigations and conclusions. The only word he had was the word "kinetics" which had been taken over as a branch of mechanics. So he explained his difficulty to his colleague the Professor of Greek in the University, who brought him the Greek word for force, and suggested its derivatives which we now use so often: dynamic, dynamics, dynamical.

This does not mean that it is an entirely new point of view. As a matter of fact there were thinkers in the ancient world who had a more dynamic conception of the universe than most moderns have. Also in other regions of life, such as art and religion, we have always known that reality was not exhausted by a bare description of things. There are as many worlds as there are ways of looking at it. The eye has ever seen æsthetically what the heart gives it power to see. We should be more ready than we are to think in terms of dynamics. We really find it hard. A stuffed

animal in a museum is more easily handled than a live one. If even men of science can sometimes go wrong by treating laboratory specimens in isolation, it is not to be wondered that ordinary people forget that everything is in the stream and that nothing "stays put." We are a bit scared of flux and change and like to snuggle back into the security of a static nest. We like settled conditions and closed incidents and solved problems. But nothing remains fixed and solved forever. New knowledge arrives, new circumstances emerge—and everything is back in the melting pot again. We are always trying to get a picture in clear outline of what we call the real world, when some new wonder of the universe puts everything out of perspective.

I am old enough to remember the beginnings of some of the things which mark our era of history. When it was thought that the new force, electricity, might be used to enable people to talk by means of a wire from Bos-

ton to New York, sceptics said that was not the real world but like children's fairyland. Then a clever Scotsman came along and invented the telephone. Anyone with knowledge enough and confidence enough to have loaned Mr. Bell a hundred dollars to help realize his vision might to-day be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Most of the men with knowledge and courage did not have a hundred dollars.

When it was bruited abroad that it might be possible to send messages across the pathless ocean three thousand miles without any wires at all there was derisive laughter, some of which I heard. That also was not the "real world." I can never forget in those early days, almost of experiment, the awe with which I received my first wireless telegram five hundred miles from New York as it came over me that this was now in our world.

But it had always been in the world. These wonders of our age—telephone, wireless

telegrams, radioactivity, television — were not presented to us from outside, like gifts on a silver salver. They were always here as possibilities. What was not here were men with knowledge and courage and faith enough to utilize what is. Who will dare draw a line and say, Thus far and no farther? The world is as big as men are big enough to master.

We men go to find our world. We go to make our world, a human world. We go to learn what the world may be to men. What is America? The word surely does not have the same connotation it had when it was inhabited only by Red Indians or even in the days of Fenimore Cooper's pioneers. The geography is the same—the same rivers and plains and hills and lakes—but it carries a vastly different meaning. The new world has become another newer world.

We go to find ourselves, to discover what we are or may be. We are the unfinished

masters of an unfinished world. However else we may describe this earth on which we live it is also and at least an arena where man plays some part and in which he is shaped and disciplined. If in any sense we make our world, our world is also making us.

We go to find our soul—if perchance we are, or can be, other than we seem. In the amazing story of adventure which we call the history of man it may be that the greatest adventure of all lies here. And so on through the whole pilgrimage of life, till we face the last great adventure and look out into the dark. Is it the end of the whole story or the beginning of a new chapter? It may be possible to say with Browning, with something of the thrill of a knight-errant of the sea, "I go to prove my soul!"

III

It is here we find the real explanation of the paramount emphasis which religion has

ever put on what it calls Faith. There is no question of its place being foremost in importance. Superficial evangelism speaks loudly of believing—"Only believe," it keeps saying. And the most profound theologian builds his whole system of doctrine on a reasoned doctrine of faith. There is seldom, if ever, an analysis of what faith in essence actually is. The word is so rich in meaning and is used in so many different senses that it is natural there should be confusion of thought. The word has almost endless shades of meaning because it is such a universal human quality.

What some call faith others of us would call credulity, and sometimes superstition. Mr. H. G. Wells, in one of his earlier books, has a character, Mr. Lewisham, who called on God for "Faith" in the silence of the night—Faith to be delivered immediately if Mr. Lewisham's patronage was valued—but which, nevertheless, was not so delivered.

That is a common thought of it, as if it could be handed over in a package. Or it is supposed to come from opening the mouth and shutting the eyes, something accepted without reason, or even against reason. Rider Haggard had a story of Rev. Thomas Bull (cousin, I suppose, of John of that ilk) whose point of view began early as a child. When the nursery had to take pills he said to his weaker sisters, "Don't think: gulp it down" —a principle which he applied all his life, especially in theology.

Of another type is the use of the word for varied sorts of acceptance by the mind of some truth. We say we believe something that is proved to us by observation, or by experiment, or by credible witness. We believe what we consider facts, or a deduction from facts. The sum total of the propositions we accept as true we call our faith. But faith is not exhausted, or explained, as the intellectual assent to truth, or even as the specula-

tive knowledge of great principles. It is more than the acceptance of proven fact, or of propositions however true.

Much confusion is caused by failure to distinguish between faith and beliefs. Beliefs are plants that grow out of the soil of faith. A belief has to be judged and tested by the laws of credibility that govern that particular kind of truth. It is open to proof or disproof. To deny it or refute it only makes room for another belief, but does not discredit faith. For example, a great wordy warfare is going on over what are called the Fundamentals of the Faith. These are important subjects fit to be discussed, and, like an argumentative Scot, I am prepared to take my share of the discussion, but whatever they are they are not fundamental. They are doctrines and institutions built on the foundation. The foundation itself is faith, which somehow escapes being considered amid the

noise of discussion over the so-called fundamentals.

IV

Faith is a spiritual attitude of welcome to what we accept as truth. It is not a purely intellectual act, but an affair of our whole nature. So it is practical, rather than speculative. It is a committal of one's self to something, a committal of one's life to what is really a hazard. We men are out on a colossal adventure. For faith is an attitude of soul in which it makes a venture on the world and life, throwing one's self on an unseen spiritual order, and by the very act it becomes the substance of things only hoped for, the evidence and proof of things that as yet are not seen. The word that comes nearest to describing the very essence of faith is the word *"venture."* We put the whole weight of our life on an assumption, and we risk everything on it.

It is sometimes said that the fact that religion begins like this narrows its appeal. But does it? Would anything else give a broader basis? If religion built itself on knowledge, it would be a philosophy, one of the little systems that have their day and cease to be. If it rested on a common human quality, like feeling, it would become a mysticism, with a far narrower appeal than even philosophy. If it were a matter of conduct, of right action, it would become a system of morality changing with shifting conditions. Because it is built on faith it has a permanent and universal appeal, as broad as humanity.

If it be objected that it is irrational to base religion on faith, the answer is that it is completely human and inevitable and therefore rational. Reason itself has to make a similar venture, and everything in human life builds on the same foundation. There is no escape from this necessity. This demand of religion underlies all life. Everything worth while in

human life rests on the same tenuous foundation—a venture on the imponderable and immeasurable. The whole world of man is like that. If this be so, it is absurd to talk of such necessity as irrational, except on the assumption that the universe is a dance of unreason —and that too would be only a venture of faith.

V

I have said that everything human stands on this footing. The solid world of business, on which we all depend, looks the most material structure erected by man. When we ask our bankers and leaders of industry on what it rests they reply that it is a system of credit—and credit, like creed, is *credo,* I believe. They will add that business needs public confidence—that is *fides,* faith. The most important development of modern business is the creation and management of what it calls "trusts." The demand which business

men are always making on each other as colleagues is for loyalty and fidelity. Trust means confident reliance on integrity, or veracity, or some such quality. Every important business word has in it the word "faith" in Latin or English. So that this immense solid structure of business is so built that if a tenuous thing like credit be impaired, or an equally tenuous thing like public confidence be lost, the whole system would crash.

All our social life also is of the same character. We are held together in groups—in families, cities, churches, states, nations—in no other way. We may think these forms of society have other sanctions, but when we investigate we discover that once again we are in the region of the imponderable. What holds America together? We say the flag, but we do not mean the silk or cotton of the fabric or the number of stars and stripes. The flag is the symbol of something that cannot be defined or even put into exact words. Or

what holds the far-flung British Empire together? Men say the King, but once again they mean the King as a symbol of something else so unsubstantial that the only word to approach its reality is the word faith. The symbol stands for home, and hearth, and liberty, and law, and order.

Even our whole intellectual life roots itself in faith. Sometimes a scientist of a narrow type will speak as if, while ordinary people might walk by faith, he is a man of science. He does not inquire how much he takes for granted before he begins his science. He takes the world for granted and himself, even the accuracy of his thinking machine, which is a mighty big assumption sometimes. He takes for granted great principles, which he leaves to philosophers or theologians to break their teeth over, like causation and the uniformity of nature. How does he know that nature is uniform? He does not begin by proving it, but simply assumes it, and gaily goes on with

his particular work, unconscious of what a man of faith he really is.

It is a little amusing to note the authoritative way some (usually laymen as far as real science is concerned) talk about science as if it were a court of law making final decisions. Professors of pseudo-sciences like Sociology sometimes pronounce grandiosely about what science is. We are informed that science has done so and so, or science says such and such. There was a time when religion was treated by some as sacred, and now some speak of science with bated breath. It is all part of the static fallacy to which we are so prone. We even speak commonly of religion and science as if they were entities by themselves, instead of achievements attained by human beings—sometimes the same human beings.

Personally I never worried much over what is called the conflict of religion and science. There will always be conflict between some

kinds of religion and some kinds of science. As it happens the two greatest men of science it has been my good fortune to see in the flesh were Pasteur and Lord Kelvin, both so eminent in different lines of scientific research. Both of them were sincerely and profoundly religious. If a scientific man is religious he is so in the same way and for similar reasons as other religious men. If a religious man is scientific, he must be adjudged so by the same standards set by his science for all.

Neither science nor religion is static, though we are always trying to make them so. They each seek to build up a body of truth, which should be held, not as final or shut to criticism, but open to revision and above all open to further truth. The one fatal intellectual heresy is the heresy of finality. It is to assume that we have come to an end of the adventure of living, with our thinking done, a state of society fixed, a system of law that need not be altered, a theology that is sacred.

Naturally it is easier to become victim to this error in religion than anywhere else, if only because it commands passionate attachment and stirs the deepest feeling.

None of our truths is the whole truth. None of our beliefs is one hundred per cent. correct. Error creeps in somewhere. Even the most exact scientific formulæ cannot cover all the ground of fact. Reality is more than can be comprehended by any single manner of approach. We have built up a body of scientific knowledge which we have the right to trust, but every addition to that knowledge alters something, if only the perspective of the whole. It may be said that the task of science is to increase the degree of truth in our findings. Only a few years ago the material universe was reduced to the common denominator of the electron, and many assumed that we had reached the ultimate analysis. Now Professor Eddington of Cambridge University asserts, and appears to prove, that

the electron is only a convenient and temporary hypothesis with no real existence. He calls it a "dummy" created by the scientific imagination to assist the imperfection of the human intellect. Certainly science to-day does not consist of classifying butterflies or adding to the nomenclature of plants, important as such tasks may be. It seems to become more and more a matter of higher mathematics, a region where very few are competent to judge.

VI

That all our intellectual life is based on faith is obvious when we consider that science begins with the assumption that we are dealing with a coherent universe. It is amenable to reason. We take for granted what we call the uniformity of nature. The mind, we believe, can handle the stuff of the universe. The only proof we have is the proof of result. The great intellectual adventure has simply

to justify itself as we go along. We find that certain things act so and so, and under certain conditions do such and such. Huxley defined scientific law as organized common sense. He made no transcendental claims for it, as so many do to-day, who use the phrase "scientific method" with an awed hush in their voice as if they were speaking in a cathedral when a religious service was going on. The important thing to note here is that there is a venture of faith which is both rational and inevitable. Not only does life depend on it, but reason itself depends on it.

The old rationalism, which began with what it called self-evident principles and moved on by step after step of logical proof, and which claimed that this was scientific method, is a fairy tale. It is not true of man's thinking and experience. Conscious reason of the old rationalist type came late in the story of man. Even a philosopher like F. H. Bradley acknowledged that metaphysics is

the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct, though he saved the day for his subject by adding that to find these reasons is no less an instinct. The best plots for comedy to the dramatic artist come from the contrast between the real motives of the characters and their alleged ones. This is because we so readily imagine that codes and conventions create our motives and produce our action, when the opposite is the fact.

Nor is the old rationalist contention the method of science. Science may be said to begin with a simple faith in the rationality of the world. It then advances a theory and sees how it happens to fit in with observed facts. If it does not succeed, it tries another one. The great triumphs of science are triumphs of creative imagination, as truly as in art, though of another sort and in another realm. Scientific faith, like religious, is the verifying of things hoped for and the evidencing of things not seen. The demand for absolute

proof by the abstraction that we call "pure reason" is an absurd demand. Nothing that we accept as true meets that demand.

After its basal assumption that we are dealing with a coherent universe science goes on to propound a specific theory which begins as a mere hypothesis. Every man of science knows that any theory, even when he is convinced that it is on the right track, has difficulties, unexplained facts, gaps that the theory does not quite cover. Take the most fruitful theory ever propounded by man, the law of gravitation. Newton knew better than anybody the difficulties that remained and even suggested that there was something undiscovered to explain these. That is why perhaps our minds were so hospitable to Einstein's theory of relativity, because it seemed to do something to complete Newton's work. Most men who have the right to pronounce on the new theory acknowledge that it too has

difficulties. But no scientist proposes that therefore we should give up the whole quest. No one declares that the universe is irrational, that nature is unknowable, and that in despair we should desert the task and resign from the adventure. No, we say humbly that at the best our present knowledge is partial, but we go on with the method, which is fundamentally a method of faith.

In the great adventure to understand the world man has to make a venture of faith. We can present to the world a great hypothesis and see how it fits the case. We can, and do, assume that the universe is rational in the sense that reason can deal with it. We can, and do, normally assume that it is causal, that we can trace effect from cause and even predict effect. We can, if we like, assume that it is casual not causal—that it is haphazard and even the result of chance. So that we can really choose the world we propose to inhabit,

and the whole future of human life depends on our choice. In a real sense man chooses, and makes his world.

VII

The fact that knowledge depends on faith goes deeper even than the fact that science is compelled to make assumptions and take unproved things for granted before it begins its work. Before we can know anything at all there is a chasm we must cross, and the only bridge by which we can cross it is a bridge of faith. *Credo ut intelligam*—we must believe in order that we may know. The only world I can be sure of is the world I built up a picture of in my brain by percepts and concepts. By all the avenues of sense I gather impressions, which all go to fill in the complete picture of reality. I cannot be sure of any other world except the world that I perceive and experience. Can I be sure of that?

How do I know that the picture laboriously painted on my brain corresponds to reality? I do not know it. I simply must believe it. The only proof we have, or can have, is the proof of putting it to the test. We must venture that it is so at any cost; for not otherwise could we live. Faith here is the venture the mind of man makes on the world for knowledge. In this faith we believe that the picture of reality we have is true. We believe that we know a reality without from our mental acts within.

By qualities just as human and by a process just as inevitable I build up a picture of another world in which we men live. As men it is of more importance to us than the mere world of sense. It is the world where the great words apply—words like goodness, beauty, truth, love, justice, and compassion. We know that there is a region of excellence and moral worth, without which we would cease to be men. We create ideals of beauty and

right, and bit by bit we have built us a human world where we live by more than bread.

How do I know that this corresponds in any respect to reality? Once again I do not know it. I can only believe it. The only proof is that of putting it to the test. If faith is the venture the mind makes for knowledge, it is no less the venture the soul makes for true and full human life. We refuse to believe that all we sense is illusion, and as resolutely we refuse to believe that all we feel is delusion. Knowledge is possible through faith in a rational order of the world, and this deeper life is possible through faith in a moral order. As a matter of fact we do actually live in that world of ideals and values, a world of moral worth and moral ends.

We see why faith should receive such emphasis and the place of first importance in religion. It is because it is more than the assent of the mind to propositions. That would make it merely a matter of opinions and ac-

cepted doctrines. It is more than beliefs, which we claim the right to test by the ordinary standards of credibility. Faith has to do with the whole bent and bias of the life and is more like an act of will—or better still it is *the will to act.* It is really the great Adventure. It is our choice of values in life, our unconscious or deliberate choice. We decide what world we choose to live in, and by so doing we go out to help create that world. We commit ourselves to an enterprise and take all the risks of the venture. We throw ourselves on an unseen moral and spiritual order, and the only proof is whether it bears our weight.

There is no use denying that there are arguments on either side. That is why I call it a venture. There are facts in plenty to support either contention. It is easy to muster the facts which argue that there is nothing in the universe but a blind drive to doom. On the other hand there are many supporting facts

which seem to show that the world is hospitable to the best in man. It is only thus that the best ever could have been produced and conserved.

VIII

What we commonly fail to realize is that it is a matter of faith on either side. In each case it is a question of venture, and we are compelled to make the venture. It is usually taken for granted that religious people walk by faith, but that irreligious or frankly secular people walk by something else that may be called unfaith. But it is faith anyway. Sooner or later, if we carry our thinking far enough, we find ourselves driven relentlessly between the horns of an ultimate dilemma. We are forced to throw the weight of our life on one of the great alternatives. Of course, we may not be conscious of ever making a choice, and normally we do not make any dramatic decision. But our real faith does not consist of the things we say we believe,

or that we think we believe, or believe that we believe. It is declared by the side of the great line of cleavage on which we stand.

It may be that those who deny a place for anything like religion are right. Perhaps the universe is a series of accidents, and flukes, and peradventures, and haphazards, and coincidences. Maybe it is only a kind of silly machine, though the supporters of a mechanistic universe seem unfortunate in their choice of a metaphor, as any "machine" known to the ordinary man implies some intellect and purpose to produce and some modicum of intelligence to run, even when it is made as "foolproof" as possible. However, that may be a quibble. But granted that in some way the universe happened, that the most astounding cosmic occurrences somehow shaped themselves into what looks like order. One day there broke off from a flaming sun what ultimately by an amazing series of flukes became this earth. By another as-

tounding series of accidents there gathered somehow on its surface some organic scum, and so on with coincidences and happy hits innumerable, till, Hey Presto! here it all is, and here we all are!

Nobody can *prove* that, as certainly nobody can be sure of that. A man if he likes can *believe* it. It is a colossal venture of faith. He calls himself an unbeliever, but that is merely because he does not believe the other interpretation. I too am an unbeliever; for I certainly do not believe his interpretation. Wherein do the two acts of ultimate faith differ? Indeed the greatest men of faith I meet on this green earth are some who call themselves unbelievers. They have to accept such tremendous miracles, and assert such unproven assumptions. They may not, probably would not, accept my wording of the case, but gild the pill as they may, they have to swallow it.

I cannot disprove the assumption by logic

—and when a Scotsman despairs of logic he has come to a sorry pass! If I am asked what I have to say about it, I merely say this, that I do not believe it. But if any believe it, they should be ready to accept the implication of their faith, unless it is not faith but only idle opinion. It implies that there can be no meaning or end—no end in purpose. There may well be an end in time to the phantasm of life, when some cosmic catastrophe might reduce the toilsome work of all the ages to chaos. Perhaps the sooner the better, if that be all. Human life can only be as the foam that forms and breaks and forms again on the surface of a stream. There can be no real sanctions for anything in life; and for men and for nations there is nothing but the law of the jungle. Weak sentimentalists like the mass of us may pretend there is some sure footing for our human order and civilization, but that is because we are weak and sentimental and will not face facts.

But surely the facts will face us late or soon. If we and all we cherish are like a helpless hulk weltering under the pitiless stars, going nowhere in special, meaning nothing in particular, how long can the farce last? It is true that the bold believers of the creed do not usually point the moral to us, though sometimes they frankly state the case. One of them, in a recent book, says bluntly that if it were not for our dreams we humans would be at each other's throats, "but never forget," he adds, "that every dream is an illusion, and every illusion is a lie." Surely sometime the truth, if it be truth, will soak in and reveal the lie on which human life is built. Surely the false underpinning will sometime crumble away, or be kicked away —and our author boasts himself of the vigour of his kicks. Then the *débâcle* of the race!

In spite of the dogmatic assertion, he really does not know that every human dream is an illusion. It is only a grandiose and emotional

statement of his faith. He may wish it to be so, or hope it, or believe it; he certainly does not know it. Heroic believer as he is, he goes out in a passion of missionary zeal to convert us to his faith. This statement of his case, which rather makes us laugh, would make him angry, but are he and his kind not like the rest of us in the plight described by Plato in the *Phædo,* taking what we believe to be the best of human doctrines, and "embarking on that as on a raft, risking the voyage of life"?

IX

Similarly, I cannot prove that the great words of the soul of man like goodness, beauty, truth, love, and justice have their roots somehow in the soil and subsoil of ultimate reality. I can only believe that, and then find out if it is not being increasingly proved by trying it out. These "dreams" that keep us humans from flying at each other's throats surely have some groundwork of fact in the

universe, if they have that effect to begin with. After all, man is a part of nature. Whether he is worth producing or not from the standpoint of the cynic, at any rate he has been produced, and what seems necessary for his very existence has some justification. Man has ever had the conviction that he is in some fashion part of a purposeful universe, and that somehow he coöperates in a meaningful life. That may be, indeed is, an act of faith, but the faith proves itself by making human life possible.

As we can begin with the assumption that the universe is casual and purposeless, we can begin with the contrary assumption. All the great controversies really lie in the region of presuppositions. It is so here; for as it cannot be proved that the world is fortuitous, there is no formal proof that it has moral ends. We claim our equal right with the other to make our venture of faith. We believe that there is an end in purpose with which we can

coöperate. We believe that what we experience of beauty and goodness and love are not illusions, and that human life is not the sport of chance. We embark on the great moral and spiritual adventure.

When we do, we find everywhere the supporting facts. We find this faith the light of everything that lives in man, and that in the strength of it we can build us a human world. We look back into history and see that the spiritual forces have ever said the last word. We see ideas and ideals creating new and vital institutions, and heroic faiths saving the world. We find as a matter of experience that life does not play man false in his noblest hopes, that life hides no treachery against the soul. "This is the true joy in life," says Bernard Shaw in one of his most self-revealing moods, "the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of na-

ture, instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

This whole venture of faith at bottom becomes a matter of *courage*. Indeed, courage is only the other side of the shield. It is the greatest of human virtues, because without it no other virtue is secure. This is the reason why men naturally admire courage and practically rank it first. It is the sign and badge of the great adventure. The true opposite of this faith is not doubt, but fear, a craven refusal to take life at its highest pitch. William James in *Why Men Believe* says, "Faith is the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance. It is in fact the same moral quality we call courage in practical affairs." At least this can be said, that only such faith can make life thrilling, full of colour and romance.

It is not blind courage, a dare-devil mood

of truculent self-assertion. It is true that man has had sometimes to go on the ragged edge of things, but it is not adventure for its own sake. That is the mere itch of novelty, scrambling for new sensations. It bases itself on knowledge. It starts from experience and merely asserts that there is further experience. Indeed, in order wisely to attain the new we need to know the old and love the old. But without courage there can be no victory for the higher interests of man; for life follows the fortunes of faith.

X

It is a common judgment that it does not really matter what a man believes, that the important thing is how he acts. As stated and as often meant, that is so obvious that it is hardly worth saying. If by faith is meant opinions, or casual views, or even speculations however profound, or propositions about subjects however serious, it is true that

it is not of first importance in a final judgment of life. But if faith is as defined in this lecture, then it is absurd to say that it does not matter what is believed. By comparison nothing else matters; for our faith is that by which we are actually living. It is the side we have taken in the great controversy, the decision we have made in the age-old problem.

Our faith becomes central for us, soaking through the whole fabric of life, indeed, creating our very world. It will thus make and condition action. It is true that we often put the cart before the horse. We accept doctrines, and beliefs, and codes and conventions, and even systems of philosophy and religion as justifications for what we are and do. They are a sort of apology for our lives. They merely reflect our prejudices and passions and customary conduct. But even so they influence action in a sort of vicious

circle; for they buttress us in our practical positions. How much more dynamic must be a serious and profound faith, a decision on the deep issues of human life.

If we assume that there is no moral order, no sanctions that have any real authority, moral passion can easily ebb out. It is hard enough to keep heights which the soul is competent to gain, but if the heights themselves are declared to be illusion, will even attempts continue? Sooner or later life follows the fortunes of faith. It does not mean that the man with a frankly secular outlook will flout all standards of decency. We are all held more or less by habit and custom and convention. But to such a man the moral interests grow dim, and the soul filters out. Life is poisoned by the conviction that all is vanity.

The man who accepts the religious hypothesis does not always live in the power of it. He does not always use it dynamically, nor

accept the implications of his faith. He too is bound by custom and tradition. But in so far as he does act on it he finds it an inspiring motive. He can be enlisted by high causes and moved to noble passions. If he believes in a spiritual order of which he is a part, and believes to the extent of venturing on it, he finds it a sufficient motive for any task, however high. He enters into the peace of him whose heart is fixed, and may even know the joy of the man who finds his life in losing it for great ends.

XI

It is along this line that we find the true place for religion. It is not that we have to constitute ourselves defenders of the faith and become painful apologists for its existence. Religion either is something elemental and necessary, or it will fade out. I like the remark of Dr. L. P. Jacks in his little book, *Religious Perplexities,* that "religion is

rather that which defends us, than that which we have to defend." Religion is paramount, not because it is peculiar and exceptional, but because it meets needs and aspirations that are universal. The essence of religion lies in its courageous acceptance of an unseen spiritual order and thus winning it for man.

For religion is not a formula of escape nor a way of safety. It is an adventure of the spirit. Clement of Alexandria, of the Second Century, who was of a cultivated pagan family, described his step from paganism into the Christian Church as taking "the noble risk of a desertion unto God." It needs only a little imagination to understand some of the pathos and heroism in the experience so modestly expressed. To break away from the safety and security of old ways, snapping tender ties of kinship and friendship, was "desertion" that meant pain and loss. Only the courage of a great faith, venturing from the

known and the usual, could have induced him to take the noble risk.

Religion, it is true, like life, is many-sided. It performs many functions and meets needs at varied stages and levels of life. There is in it a healing ministry, comforting, consoling, strengthening, rescuing even salvage. There is in it a message for the weak, delivering from despair, issuing in a sense of safety and peace. It brings security where before was fearfulness and a deep dismay. But it has also a clarion call to the strong; for it represents the power that lifts human life to higher levels, and points to the path that reaches the stars. It speaks of noble risks, dangers to be surmounted, new territory to be invaded and possessed.

It is with this aspect of it that the idea of adventure specially relates itself. Religion is often looked on as a kind of insurance to avoid the chance of future loss. Or it is thought of as a way of escape from com-

passing ills, a way of making life safe from menacing dangers. "Safety first," however, cannot adequately describe religion, if in its very essence it is an adventure of the spirit. It is the drive and urge of vital force beyond the seen and tangible. Even in a material sense we see this in every great religious movement. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is a story of amazing spiritual adventure, not only for single souls like Paul, but for groups of common men. We see the weak things of the world go out to master the strong, to meet Greek philosophy and Roman government, to turn the world upside down. They deserted from the known and usual, and took noble risks.

But apart from these dramatic periods of human history when a new era arises, this sense of adventure is of the very nature of religion. We trust intangible things, and put confident reliance on things unseen, and move to ends that are unknown. We ache for white-

winged loveliness, and out of the ache art is born. We seek to understand, and from the seeking comes knowledge. We dream of a world of values, of ideals, of love, of goodness, and soon we are actually living in that world. The faith in each case justifies itself. The venture brings home a rich freight to nourish man's higher life. At any rate man has grown to be man, such as he is, through such faith. We go out in faith to find and, in a real sense, to make our world.

All our enduring institutions are built of such stuff. Over the arch at the entrance to the University of Virginia are carved words which must surely thrill every student at least once in his life. They read:

> Pass through this Gateway and seek
> the light of truth
> the way of honour
> the will to work for men.

They give voice to the high thought and noble passion to which youth responds and which

keep the world alive. Yet it all is the expression of faith, unproven and unprovable—unproven except to the soul, and unprovable except by experience. Why should we ask our best-beloved to give themselves to the selfless love of truth when in the short view it rarely seems to pay to seek truth and pursue it? Why ask them to tread the path of honour, when often honour has led men and nations down to dusty death? Why, when every instinct is demanding immediate satisfaction, should they offer every power in the will to work for others?

Could there be a faith more magnificent than that which throws human life on ideals like truth and honour and service? We are dealing with the imponderable and intangible and immaterial. Yet on this foundation we build not only our universities, but all our great institutions. We stake our all on this for a world where men are willing to live. It is easy to sit in the scoffer's chair and speak

slightingly of human ideals—and it is a tremendous venture in a world like this to assume that they can make a stable base on which to rear the whole structure of our lives. Yet without them everything human withers and perishes from the face of the earth. Grover Cleveland's last words were, "I have tried so hard to do right." It is the deathless faith of the human heart, even when wrong seems ever on the throne, that it is worth while so to live.

This at least seems certain that only faith in spiritual values will enable us to go on being man. Nothing else will give sufficient motive for the high tasks that are ours. Otherwise we will refuse the burden and end the long passion of the saints. Everything we cherish, our order of life, our institutions, all that we call our civilization, have come to us as a heritage from the past. They are the labours of countless generations of men who have lived and died in that faith, and we have

entered into their labours. Craven must we be, if we lay down the load and put an end to the dream. Even if we thought it only a forlorn hope, there is that in us that would still call us to join the goodly company of the seekers —saints and seers and sages—who through the ages have sought. What seek they? They seek the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

II

THE ADVENTURER

If a certain formula for expressing the nature of the world violates my moral demand, I shall feel as free to throw it overboard, or at least to doubt it, as if it disappointed my demand for uniformity of sequence.

—William James.

I

WE HAVE seen that there is a venture of faith which is both rational and inevitable; for not only life but reason itself depends on it. In the great adventure to understand and use the world man is forced to go out, not knowing whither, and in the venture he finds his world. What of the Adventurer himself? Man chooses and makes his world. He goes also to find himself, what he is and what he may be. What then is man?

It is not a new question. None of the great questions we still ask are new. They have been forced on man throughout the ages. He has tried to wrest from Nature her secrets and has sought to fathom the mysteries around him. He has ever asked—wonderingly, wistfully, doubtingly, sometimes hopefully—the great questions of whence, and

whither, and why. He has naturally asked questions about himself, who he is, his place in the universe, his history, and his destiny. While asking, What is the world? he keeps asking also, What is man?

One common and very natural way of seeking to answer the question is by tracing out origin, going back to find how he came to be. A danger to which this method is open is to assume that when we have elucidated the history of man we have disposed of the subject. Lord Balfour in his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt* made the useful and necessary distinction between the causes and the reasons of belief. It is a distinction that ought always to be kept in mind in the investigation and discussion of any human possession or institution. The first relates to history. How did it come about? Can we trace the steps that led to the happening, the causes that produced the belief? The second has to do with appreciation. However it happened; whether

we can or cannot satisfactorily trace the steps by which it came to be; what is its meaning and value?

The two questions ought to be kept separate in the mind of every student of whatever subject. Besides the judgment of origin there is a judgment of worth. Too often we think that the one disposes of the other. In investigating the causes of anything human, such as a belief, we are inclined to think that we have fully explained it when we have traced the process by which it came. We even sometimes seem to think that we have explained it away, as if no more need be said about it now that we know something of its origin. This is a very common fallacy, very irritating to some who may know nothing of the genesis of some treasured belief but who have large knowledge of its value.

The natural history of a thing does not discredit the thing as it is. The importance of this we will see when we come to consider

what man is essentially. To describe the process by which the giant oak came from the puny acorn does not discredit the oak if it has beauty or value in itself. There is a natural history of everything, and when we have marked that out step by step we often think that is all that need be said of it. But when we have finished with the *causes* we have still to consider the *reasons*. After asking and as fully as possible answering the question How? there remains the bigger question Why? Everything has not surely been said when we have dealt with the question how something happens to be. There still is the question, What is its value? We can see the importance of the distinction by taking a few illustrations in varied spheres of human affairs.

II

There is a natural history of all man's achievements. For example, there is a natural

history of the Bible. It has been subjected to a criticism unparalleled in all literature. Scholars have applied to it the severest rigour of critical research. They have dealt with manuscripts and dates and authorship and authenticity and questions of editing and re-editing. They have taken it book by book, sometimes have analyzed a book into different documents. They have traced sources, and find behind the oldest document still more ancient traditions and folklore incorporated. When they have done all that, they can say that they have finished the job. But have they really explained it—its power, its vision, its spiritual influence? Above all they surely have not explained it away, so that no more need be said of it. When criticism has done its best and its worst, there is still the incomparable literature of the Bible. In addition to the interesting story of how it came to us, we can still ask, What is its worth for us? Has it any beauty or truth, any guidance

for life, any spiritual appeal? After faithfully dealing with all the causes which gave us the Bible, are there any reasons why it has value for us in our modern world?

Similarly, scholars have investigated the sources of Shakespeare's plays and the influences on his life. They may tell us that he got his blank verse from Marlowe, the story for a plot from Plutarch, that he "lifted" whole plays from earlier dramatists, and so on. But when all that interesting research has ended there is still Shakespeare, and we have other judgments to make on his work and other uses to put it to, besides those of the critics. Even if they decided that the plays were not written by him but by another man of the same name, there would still be our Shakespeare. This distinction applies to all the achievements of man. After all questions of origins and sources and methods are settled, if they ever are, there remain other questions. Scholars, historians, critics, archæ-

ologists, do very valuable and important work for us, but they do not say the only word on the subject, nor do they say the last word.

There is also a natural history of every human institution, as, for example, marriage. There is almost a whole library written on the subject, and there are constant additions of books and articles describing some phase of its involved history. In a queer, wrong-headed way some seem to think that marriage is discredited by the past story. You may trace it back to the marriage customs of the cave man, if you know anything of the cave man—which I gravely doubt. But what of the institution as it is, as it has come to be, as it may be, as perhaps we agree it should be? This is not nullified by your description of a process. Some of the modern innovators, who propose to discard marriage for other arrangements, are not good evolutionists; for nature already, by the survival of the

fittest, has ruthlessly wiped out the proposed arrangements.

There is a natural history of every human attribute, such as conscience. You may describe how man responded to various kinds of urges within and necessities without, how he decided that certain things were right for him and other things were wrong. You may even explain why he so decided, and how he made taboos and sanctions and imperatives and conventions. You may explain how much of it was the fruit of fears and hopes, how much from the instinct of self-preservation, and how much from the necessities of social living. But you do not thereby dispose of the whole subject, and you cannot assume that it has no further meaning for modern man. Some speak as if I had no longer the right to speak of conscience or appeal to it, now that we know something of its history. It is true that formerly men referred to it as if it were an organ of the body, as if man had a

conscience as he has lungs or liver. But it is stupid to muddle up the two different judgments, as if the one discredited the other, so that there can be no sanctions and imperatives of conscience because we know something of the process by which it came. One is a mere judgment of origin; there remains a judgment of worth.

III

The fact is that the greater part of what we call science is mere description. The more careful and accurate the description, the better is the science. Evolution, which is another name for what we have been calling natural history, does not really explain anything. It is only the description of a process. Of course, in that much is explained, in the sense of understanding how form emerged from previous form. But often we assume that a careful, minute description of such a process is all we need to understand it completely,

and the element of mystery has been eliminated. No further questions need be asked, as we now know all about it. Of course no real scientist thinks or talks like that. He is more than ever impressed by the beauty and wonder of all he has been investigating. But in these days we all talk with the assurance of vagueness, and sometimes with the dogmatism of ignorance, about what science is and says and does and even implies.

Take life. Suppose you go back and back, step by step, without acknowledging a link missing, till you come to almost nothing, and you wonder if you cannot take the final step to nothing itself. What have you really explained by that other than the stages of your process? At each step something has evaporated—you do not know what. Or if you reverse the process, you begin with almost nothing and go on stage by stage till here we are. There has been some subtle acretion all the way along which you do not mention.

You do not mention it, for you do not happen to know what it is. The description of a process does not explain anything but the process.

The natural history of man does not discredit man. It helps us to understand much and to answer many questions, but it leaves other questions unanswered and sometimes unasked. Some theories and investigations have the appalling danger of satisfying the mind with what Chesterton calls a full and false explanation. The tragedy is that they do often satisfy the mind. When you have said that the fall of the leaf is due to the deoxydizing of the chlorophyle you can rest satisfied that you have said the last word about it, and you can even shut your eyes to the beauty of the autumn tints. But when you have described how men came to be, if you think you can, there is still the question of what he is—the meaning of him. There is a realm of values to be considered, even if, and

when, you have exhausted the realm of process. Besides the judgments of origin there are judgments of worth. When all the causes are elucidated, there still remain the reasons. A university should be something more than a series of laboratories. When we have carefully noted and recorded how our laboratory specimens act and react, we surely have to put them back into their relations with the whole, and ask what and why they are, as well as how they came to be.

It would be foolish to assume that the two kinds of inquiry should be kept separate forever, in airtight compartments. And it would be more than foolish to expect that definite findings in one inquiry will not affect results in the other. What we are really asserting is that there is another kind of inquiry to be made as well as that of origin. When you have weighed the brain of a monkey and the brain of a man you have done an interesting thing which may even have important results, but

you have not done much to answer a possible question why the brain of man should have produced the Athenian Parthenon, the Hermes of Praxiteles, the Book of Job, Homer's Iliad, or Shakespeare's plays. We have something more to say of these and of the whole world of art and music and literature and science which man has created.

IV

Questions about the nature of man and his place in the universe are not new. Throughout the ages man, faced with an inscrutable universe, has wondered about himself and has asked, What is man in the presence of the mystery of the earth and the glory of the sky? It is sometimes inferred that the question comes with a new poignancy and insistence because of the immensity of the universe as we now know it. The world as the modern views it is so different from the world of the ancients that there can be no comparison.

There can be no useful purpose served in trying to find out what anyone in the far past had to say about it. The comparison could only be a contrast.

I fancy, however, that the *relative* position of modern man and the universe as he knows it is pretty much like that of ancient man and his world. Our universe is vaster and infinitely grander, but it cannot be any more mysterious and majestic than it was to an ancient. Though he thought of it as built in three stories, and to us his conception was puny compared to our stellar spaces and our infinite universe, yet the wonder of what he saw awed him, and the mystery thrilled him. That little old world of earth and sky evoked from the mind and heart of man epics grander than modern man has since imagined. After all, mere size and bulk are not the most impressive features of reality. A thousand extra miles of desert are not a thousand times more impressive than a single mile

of it. The infinitely small is as marvellous as the infinitely great. Indeed, to-day we are more thrilled by the wonders of the atom and the electron than by the wonders of the solar systems.

We get some insight into the way the external world affected a sensitive mind of the far past from the exquisite little poem from the Hebrew Psalter, Psalm VIII. It describes the poet looking at the sky at night, awed by its beauty and magnificence. He feels crushed into insignificance by the glory of moon and stars. From the weakest thing he knows, the prattle of babes and sucklings, he turns to the blazing wonder of the Syrian sky. In the presence of all that majesty and mystery he asks, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

His first reaction is precisely the reaction on the modern mind awed by the wonders of the telescope, of the *littleness of man.* He and

we alike have felt the pettiness of human life before the limitless and enigmatic universe. What is man? A puny child of time, a creature of the dust, a thing of the moment, an insignificant speck before the immeasurable and eternal. He is crushed and humbled and awed by the thought of man's weakness and littleness.

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of
Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars which Thou hast
ordained;
What is man?

It is a dramatic contrast between the infinitely little and the infinitely vast.

Could a modern describe more poignantly his own first sensation as he, too, ponders on the greatness of the universe? No cynic with his slighting words could humble us more effectively than is done by simply placing our pettiness before such grandeur. What is

man indeed, puffing up his little mind with his trivial importance? Our cynics we have always with us, and possibly they serve a useful function in keeping us humble. In my youth, college students had the benefit of Thomas Carlyle's opinion of man. It was tonic in result and certainly sardonic in method. Man was a futile, featherless biped, shaped like a forked radish, curiously carved about the head. It might still be useful for modern youth to let the sardonic Scot lash him with the tongue which he tired in praise of silence. We hardly need him to-day with our multitude of modern cynics who do his job as heartily if not so artistically. They rub our noses in the mud, from which it seems we emerged in the shape of some bygone progenitor. What is man but a momentary efflorescence of some organic scum that somehow gathered on a puny planet? I do not think that they are as effective in their day as Thomas Carlyle was in his. And all the

biting words of the bitterest satire on the pretensions of man cannot put us in our place more surely than the ancient poet did with a stroke, as he brought man into blinding contrast with the immensity of creation.

Notice the poet's next reaction, and it is duplicated often in the experience of the modern man. Swift on the heels of the first thought of the littleness of man comes the thought of the *greatness of man.* Says the poet:

Thou hast made him a little lower than God,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet.

This swift change from depression to elation, from humility to mastery, seems contradictory, yet the psychology of it is evident, and it is almost an inevitable experience.

He has moved from the world without to the world within. He alone of all created things could understand and appreciate the grandeur of that external universe. He alone had come to consciousness of self, and consciousness of a world where he played a part. He lifted his head in a sense of mastery, that he could use the world for human ends. He has all things under his feet, bird of the air, beast of the field, fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea. In one of the beautiful stories of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis the world is described as finished, all ready as it were for something and yet meaning nothing for lack of it; for we read, "and there was not a man to till the ground." It is as if the purpose of it all was up to then unfulfilled.

From the world without to the world within! What happened to the ancient poet under the stars at night is what still often happens. The soul refuses to be dismayed and

engulfed by mere bulk or magnitude. A world with no mind conscious of it, no eye even to appreciate its beauty, no brain to understand its order, no will to give to its ends would be nothing. It might as well be chaos, without form and void with darkness upon the face of the deep. So the world becomes, as it ever must become, an arena where man plays his part before high heaven. "I think Thy thoughts after Thee, O God," said Kepler the astronomer. He was no more daunted by the wonders of the stars than was the ancient psalmist.

It is no otherwise when we prolong the story of the making of the universe, or even see it still in the making, and when we prolong the story of the making of man. Our estimate of the meaning and value of human life is only enriched by the long story of the earth. Religion may well look on it as preparation for man. Then in the long story of man himself what amazing adventures there

have been. Nothing that we have knowledge of can match, for example, the first step when man made transition from savagery to what we call civilization. Dr. James H. Breasted in his presidential address to the American Historical Association called it "the most remarkable event in the history of the universe so far as it is known to us." We have not imagination enough to picture those first hazardous and hard steps in the human conquest of a planet. If men have gone to find and make their world, as truly have they gone to find and make themselves.

V

Thus from another angle we have the same stubborn dilemma and are faced with the same necessity of choice. We make a great venture on the world, and we make as great a venture on ourselves. We saw that in our venture of faith on the world there are obvious arguments on both sides. That is why

we can rightly call it a venture. On one side are the facts that seem to show nothing in the world but blind drive of non-moral force. Nature can be read to prove that what looks like meaning and value and purpose are delusion. On the other side are the facts that prove that the world hides no treachery for the man who trusts it. There is the first fact that man and the best in man are themselves part of nature.

So in the choice we must make as to what man is there are arguments that justify either conclusion. On one side it is easy to point to the facts that link man to everything below him. He emerged out of the slime, and traces of his origin remain with him. Signs there are in plenty of his animal ancestry. The ape and the tiger are not far to seek. The cynic can laugh with reason at man's pretensions and point to the base instincts and filty habits and bestial ways, all the degradation and vice and low cunning of the

animal man. He discounts all man's high deeds as conscious or unconscious hypocrisy, and his noble thoughts as a sort of play-acting. He explains everything that seems high by instincts and passions that are obviously low. We can assume that this is man, and is all that need be said or can be said about him. The beauty and grace and goodness of some of our experience are only self-deception or childish illusion. We like to strut on the stage, playing at being heroes or saints or sages or some other pretense, but really we are only empty animalculæ sporting in the pool of life. We might spare our pity and pride for what we think the human comedy, and even our laughter and tears. There is not even comedy in the drama of man—only farce.

On the other side is the long story of the ascent of man, the slow mastery of nature, the slower mastery of himself. It is a long

way we have come, a long and toilsome climb, and there are blood marks on every stage of the flinty track. The story catches the breath with its pathos and beauty as well as its tragedy and squalor. The checkered human career has in it deeds of high emprise, acts of sacrifice, tales of heroism that glorify the race. Lives have been lived with patience and courage and selfless love that create in us reverence for man. They are not confined to the great ones or saints of old of whom we have heard with the hearing of the ears. There are the humble saints whom we ourselves have known, maybe have loved and lost, whose memory clings like a fragrance. They make it easy for us to believe great things of the race to which they and we belong. We are unworthy of our past heritage and our present privilege if we forget the great society of the noble living and the noble dead. This also is a fact, that every high thought and every splendid passion exemplified in others

find instant response in our heart. We can say that this is man at his best, this is the true man, this is what he may be and should be, what he in nature is.

We can take our choice; indeed, we have to take our choice. We can make our venture of faith here as easily as anywhere else. We can joint issue as truly on the question of the nature of man as of the nature of the world or of the nature of God. It is in the region of presuppositions that the real battle has to be waged. If facts justify us in making a final presupposition, and if experience does not contradict it, everything else follows as a matter of course. It becomes the foundation on which we rest our whole thinking and living. It may be that for us moderns this is the place where the battle has to be fought. That this should be so is in line with our modern method and our whole intellectual climate. We naturally approach every subject this way.

VI

Even in attempting to formulate a reasonable theology for the modern mind, this is what we do. First of all we do not make a dogmatic approach, as if theology were a sacred system claiming final authority. Theology is only the attempt of the mind of man to understand the facts of religion and to interpret the experience of religion. That is why its statement must change with changing conditions. It must be stated for different ages in order to come into line with all other contemporary knowledge. As in science itself, so in theology we seek to build up a body of truth to express reality as we know it. In neither case should it be stated dogmatically as if we had arrived at a final statement, like the laws of the Medes and Persians that could not be altered. It has authority, but is always open to revision. We ought to be even humbler here than in the scientific

realm, for the facts dealt with in religion are not so simple and concrete.

A theology does not alter the facts but can only state them in a new relationship. If religion is innate in man, whether it spring from his personal or social life or both, nothing we can say in forming theories can destroy it. Like all life, it lives by its own divine right. Biology merely attempts to describe what life is and does. Theology attempts to do the same to religious life, and a new theology (so-called) can only attempt to state and relate the facts better. The new Copernican astronomy did nothing to the sun and moon and stars. It only offered a new explanation that would better fit the recorded movements. So the facts and experience of religion remain. All a theology can do is to suggest a new statement and explanation.

Personally I do not like the common distinction made between old and new theology.

It is about as useless a distinction as that between old and new science. If there is an old theology there is also an older, and there are many grades of new through newer to the newest. It does not follow that the newer a theory is the truer it becomes. Briefly stated, the distinction is that men used to begin in theology with a presupposition about God, His nature and attributes. From that, theology built up its whole system, formulated a doctrine of man and his relation to God. The facts of the case compelled the next step of the system as a fall of man from his state of innocency, which meant a doctrine of sin. Then came a statement of the way out for man, which meant a doctrine of redemption. And so on, building up a consistent logical system. It is a splendid, closely reasoned system, but there is nothing sacred about it, as if it were the final and unalterable last word. It was an attempt to put into

reasoned order all the facts of religious man, in so far as the facts were then understood. We can see that it tried for too much, to explain the universe and God by a set of propositions.

Instead of this we may begin with a presupposition about man to explain the facts as we see them. We start with anthropology rather than pure theology, man's history religiously, man as he has been and as he is. So that, in a sense, instead of beginning by asking, What is God? we begin by asking, What is man? Psychology and sociology contribute to the first step, the study of man's inner nature and of his social life, his past history, and his present experience. We consider all we can learn of man, what he has felt and known and done, all the relics left of his civilization. We make a venture of faith on ourselves. When asked what man is, one answer is that he is religious by nature.

VII

In this we are not making any transcendental claim, but merely in the same sense as any other completely human quality. When we say that man is a religious animal we do not imply that he is always, and altogether, and in the same degree religious. We say it in the same sense as that he is rational or æsthetic. By that we mean that the possibilities of reason and appreciation of beauty are in his nature. Man, of course, can be irrational and can prefer ugliness, as he can be irreligious. He is not always as rational and as susceptible to beauty as he should be and as he might be, nor as religious as he could be. The claim we make is simply that, however you define it or explain it, man has that in his nature which makes him religious.

The different human activities that we sum up in the word religion obviously serve purposes and express meanings and realize

values which seem to be essential to human life. The facts prevent us from pronouncing religion as something freakish that will pass with the passing years. Nor can we any longer explain it as the invention of priests. The priest did not invent religion, but religion invented the priest. It is not something alien to man's nature, or something forced on him except by a biological and psychological necessity. Wherever man is, or has been, there is religion. We see it in history, in all the relics left in the long story. Indeed, practically nothing has been left except what testifies to man's religion, from the pyramids and tombs of Egypt and the ruins of temples in Greece, and as far back as history can be traced. It must be something fundamental in man and must satisfy elemental needs.

So universal is this that even if somewhere there was found a tribe of men who had nothing that could be called religion, the argument would not be affected. We could only

say that at last there had been found a tribe of men so below the level of man, so infra-human, that they had no religion. We would make the same sort of judgment of a race of men who showed no dawning of reason, or no standards of any sort of excellence or beauty.

It would be beyond my present purpose to show in detail how specific doctrines in what is called the old theology would still remain from this different manner of approach. For example, what has been called the doctrine of sin is not dissipated into thin air, as some seem to suppose. For pretty soon we come up against the tragic alienation of man from his best life, the fissure in his nature, evidence of which is everywhere in history and in experience. We may not view it as the effect of a fall from innocency, but may think of it as failure to attain. We may call it by modern names like frustration, but the modern experience does not appear very dif-

ferent from the sense of sin, of which literature is full.

If, then, we make our presupposition about man, encouraged as we are by all the facts, if we make the venture of faith on ourselves, it is not hard to find a place for all that men have thought worth while in religion and life. This is more important than finding a place for doctrines in a theology. It is not hard to see man somehow coöperating with God in some purpose for the world. We see man rising, age after age, to what we can call his true nature as son of God. We see him, as Jesus saw him, fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. We see him, as the ancient psalmist saw him, made a little less than divine. The claims for him and the calls to him which religion makes do not look, from this point of view, extravagant.

It is true that we see not yet all things put under man's feet, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, after quoting the same

passage from the Eighth Psalm. He is imperfect and blundering, and even in the realm of religion he falters by the way. At the best he is the unfinished master of an unfinished world. "But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus" [1]—symbol of what we are, prophecy of what we shall be. It may be made to mean much of inspiration for character and life that He is tied up in the bundle of human life, that He lived His gracious life on the human scene. We gather courage and hope and a new dawning of faith that He is of the race, the Son of Man, even the typical, representative man.

VIII

It is only in exceptional men that the quest for truth and beauty and goodness becomes a passion, but we claim kinship with them and acknowledge the same capacities in

[1] Hebrews 2 : 8, 9.

varied measure. There are some who persistently foul their own nest, as a homely Scottish proverb has it. They tell us that to expect men to be reasonable or to expect them to love beauty is a joke. And they almost foam at the mouth when religion is mentioned. They seem ever anxious to prove, and always ready to assert, the worst of man. They are complete pessimists so far as the human race is concerned.

It is even carried over into the realm of art. Some of our writers seem to think that art consists in a careful catalogue of everything sordid in life, a photographic facsimile of things morbid and unsavoury. This is glorified as realism. Some even try to make us believe that a microscopic view of filth is realism. As a matter of fact, there never was such a selective process as theirs, leaving out not only other and contrary facts, but leaving out the drastic sanity of true realism, and above all leaving out that which alone makes

art at all, the glow and glory of imagination. A realist of that type writes in commendation of the book of another, "If there is a writer in America to-day who can lay hold of mean people and mean lives and tear their mean hearts out with more appalling realism, his work is unknown to me." This was supposed to be such high praise that the publisher used it to advertise his wares. Appalling would be indeed the right word to use in criticism of the book for its bad taste and bad art.

Joseph Conrad, who was certainly not a romanticist in dealing with life, says, "What one feels so hopelessly barren in declared pessimism is just its arrogance. It seems as if the discovery made by many men at various times that there is so much evil in the world were a source of proud and unholy joy to some of the modern writers. . . . To be hopeful in an artistic sense it is not necessary to think that the world is good. It is enough

to believe that there is no impossibility of its being made so." This is as true in life as it is in art. The true optimist does not shut his eyes to ugly facts, nor pretend to himself that all is well with the world, but he believes that it can be made better.

These contemners of men take a very peculiar position, as they always leave themselves out of the judgment. I notice that they always speak from a high altitude as themselves possessors of qualities that fit them to be judges. They have the standards; they alone know reason and beauty when they see them; the rest of us are rank outsiders. There never was such an aristocratic claim as this calm assumption of superiority. It reminds one of the incident related of Frederick the Great. When an eager supporter of the then popular doctrine of Illuminism spoke enthusiastically of what education would do if we accepted the assumption of goodness in the human race, he said, "You don't know

the race." He of course knew, and knew what a depraved and hopeless lot they were, and in some mysterious way he did not himself belong to the race. All these personal judgments, past and present, are of no special importance, but they would be important if they represented a wide and growing view. The whole future of the world depends on how far we make our venture of faith on man.

It may be noted that these traducers of mankind, the critics who take a view of human nature which leaves no real place for religion, sneer more or less at all ideals, and to-day especially sneer at the ideal of democracy. In this they are completely logical. It is natural that the contempt of democracy, which is so fashionable to-day, comes from the school of unbelievers. Unless we can believe in the good of human nature the rule of the people is an absurdity. Faith in the people rests on the belief that in spite of ignorance and folly and mob passion, and all

the rest of the indictment which we know so well, yet the average man is honest and fair and wants to do right. I do not see how you can be a real democrat on any other basis. It may perhaps be said in passing that the average man is wronged by his leaders in a more fatal way than by their severe strictures on him. We make an appeal too often to the baser side of man, to prejudice and self-interest. The better side of man is the stronger side, if we would believe it seriously and apply the faith unflinchingly.

Sometimes, we must in fairness acknowledge, this attitude of detraction is not a faith but a mood induced by the failure of some political or social reform eagerly longed for. The disappointed reformer sometimes gets soured, and puts the blame on the people whose good he was seriously seeking. He now thinks that they are not capable of following great causes. They are too selfish and too indifferent to give themselves to an ideal.

Well, it simply is not true. One thinks how men have risen even to the poor tarnished ideals offered them, how they have given themselves in splendid sacrifice for the best they knew, how they have died for causes that were at least bigger than their own selfish ends. We, at least, might be spared this sort of detraction, who have seen men go to their death by the million for such causes. Age after age they have responded in amazing nobility to the lure of the only ideals their so-called leaders have offered. The truth is that their leaders have rarely had the vision and the courage to sound the call to the highest in men. They do not make demands on mankind's spiritual energy.

IX

It is no wonder that so many, who to-day laugh at democracy and despise the idealism and pathetic faiths of mankind, should be frankly anti-Christian. For Jesus is the one

leader of men who deliberately staked everything on His faith in men. Of course, it grew out of His faith in God. The two were really inseparable, as could be easily proved from His teaching. It is a question whether if we lose His faith in the one we can retain the other. But apart from that there is no doubt that He taught, as none before or since has taught, the absolute worth of the single soul. His assurance here is something tremendous.

It was not mere theory with Him. He fearlessly put it into practice, and this was the great objection taken against Him in His life. He might have been forgiven His remarkable ideas and His uncommon doctrines if He had not run counter to traditional religion. He might have kept His amiable views about publicans and sinners, and even been allowed to talk about them at dinner tables, as the modern Dives speaks sympathetically of Lazarus and has his philanthropic views on the submerged tenth—

and everybody thinks the better of him for that. The heart of the objection was that He acted it out, and in that endangered the prestige of the whole social and religious system —"this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Something of the same high faith in man as man has remained with His followers in every age; for it is essential to the Christian position. The first great polemic against Christianity was written by the philosopher Celsus in the Second Century, and this was one of the counts in his indictment, that Christians seemed to be absorbed in their interest in the depraved and the outcasts. He could not understand this sympathy for the low, especially in a new religion appealing for a hearing. He saw this religion offering itself to slaves and the scum of Roman society, and even seemed to prefer these to the wise and learned and respectable like himself. He quite sincerely thought that the

method of pagan religions, appealing to the good and the pillars of society, only natural and right. As to the others he had really nothing to say to them; they were beyond his pale, outside his interest as a thinker.

The distinction to note here is simply that the Christians of the Second Century believed in what they called conversion, and Celsus did not. The depraved had nothing in their nature to which effective appeal could be made. The outcasts were out, and that was all to be said about it. It really was the same distinction between Jesus and the Pharisees of His day. Jesus received sinners because He believed in them, believed that the lost could be found, and that they too were not far from the Kingdom of God. His opponents left them as impossible and hopeless. It would not be worth referring to this if it only represented a historical incident of which we have no parallel. The proletariat in ancient Rome got their name as citizens of

the lowest class who could contribute nothing to the state except offspring. Their only use to the state was to produce children. The point of view has never been obsolete, as we think of the times since, when the same classes had no value except to provide cannon fodder for a nation's army or give raw material for its industrial machine.

X

It is obvious that there lies a conflict in the whole view of human nature, the conception of the worth of man and the reasons for the judgment. It appears that Jesus had a view of human nature entirely opposed to one current in His day and in every day. By His view of human nature I do not mean His analysis and explanation of the relation of body and soul, or of the rational and the spiritual, of which so much learned play has been made. He made no such analysis, and His language about man is the language of

the time. But religion is interested alone in judgments of worth, and Jesus had some clear judgments of man's worth.

His whole teaching took that for granted, and He acted on it unflinchingly. He ever took men on their strongest side. He accepted the highest in them as representing their true self. He believed the best of them, and so despaired of none but hoped for all. He discovered soul, however buried in sense. He saw the making of heroes in the most unlikely quarters. In the company of sinners He dreamed of saints. He accepted men at their own highest estimate and crowned their highest with a higher still. There is certainly nothing low and unworthy in His view of the race. They are capable of anything; there are no heights of sacrifice and daring and love to which they may not aspire.

This was not because of any facile optimism in His fundamental thinking, but rather the opposite. In some respects His

thinking was nearer to pessimism. He never looked at the world through rose-coloured spectacles. He based His teaching, not only on the existence of evil, but on the deadly power of evil. The shadow of a cross lay athwart His own path. He never expected easy triumph even for His cause, but predicted cruel persecution and malice and sometimes death like His own for His followers. The gates of hell were ever near and open. Yet on the basis of what we might well call pessimism Jesus raised the most amazing optimism the world has ever known. He looked forward calmly to the actual establishment on earth of a veritable Kingdom of God—and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The root of the whole confidence lay in the sublime faith that man is child of God.

It is in this connection that we understand His attitude to children. He was in the habit of thinking of childhood as central and of

bringing everything back to the child. He put the child in the midst, not only of His disciples, but of His whole thought—"of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." This was not a sentimental attitude, the grace and beauty and weakness of the young appealing to Him as the grace and litheness of kittens appeal to an artist. Nor was it the preacher's attitude—using the child as a sort of object lesson to teach disciples humility and other moral virtues. It was because He saw the infinite possibilities in the soul of man. It was simply part of the stuff of His central faith.

That faith was more than a belief in the abstraction called humanity. This is a grandiose conception that usually means nothing when it comes to practice. Humanity means little until we analyze it down to men, women, and children. We cannot glorify humanity as a worshipped ideal if the individual men who compose humanity have no worth in themselves. This is precisely where

the amazing declaration of Jesus was made. What did it mean as a practical policy?

In the first place it meant reverence for man as man. His regard for men was not due to any adventitious qualities, not for man as educated, as highly gifted, as civilized, as religious, but simply and solely as man. His was not a sentimental enthusiasm for humanity, but an enthusiasm for men, all men, any man. He went to the rockbottom of the race, to the deep below the depths, and claimed all as sons of God. Henceforth all divisions and barriers between man and man, all class and caste are broken down.

It follows, therefore, that it meant also hope for man. The question in its deepest resolves itself into the possibility and power of redemption, and Jesus pronounced for redemption and hope. He, who sought out the social wreckage, knew the worst of men, knew the wickedness and degradation possible, Himself in His own person experienced their

injustice and cruelty. Yet He hoped for man, believed in man, and for man gave His life. He believed in the nobleness that lies sleeping in men, but never dead.

XI

This faith would be incredible if it were not that it succeeded, and succeeds. It justified itself in fact. It was divine as a gospel, but it was also wise as a policy, as results show. When the two sons of Zebedee[1] came in childish and selfish ambition asking to have the two thrones next Him in the Kingdom, in stern tenderness He asked, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" Though they did not understand all that it meant of suffering and glory, yet they had been long enough with Him to know something of the meaning, and the light kindled in their eye as they replied, "We are able." Their Master took them at their highest,

[1] Matthew 20 : 20-28.

without any rebuke of their presumption or any assurance of their weakness, and simply answered, "Ye shall indeed."

And they did. The Christian centuries are proof that they and men like them rose to the Master's sublime faith in them. He knew how to hold the hearts of men in thrall and send them in confidence to the mightiest tasks. We do not wonder that the woman who was a sinner, restored to the purity of her womanhood by His high faith in her, should in a passion of love and gratitude wash His feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head.

This faith of Jesus produced the two miracles of early Christianity—the Christian life and the Christian society. In its ideal it was a life of heroic goodness. This is no mere stern adherence to cold ethical precepts, as in Stoicism, but a way of living inspired by a great conviction about God and God's loving purpose, and a great conviction about

man and man's filial relation. Goodness like this is not a theory of philosophy nor a question of taste. It is a passion, an imperious call from which there is no escape and no desire to escape. The early literature testifies to this. Even in what may be called an official document to his government such as Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan, we note how a mere observer saw where the emphasis was. He wrote, "They [Christians] have bound themselves with an oath, not for crime, but that they will not commit theft or robbery or adultery, will not break their word, and will not deny a deposit when demanded." The note of heroic goodness is one secret of the growth of the religion, and it was called forth by the sheer faith that men were capable of it.

If this venture of faith on man is left as a sentiment, it will die when it meets cold realities. Anatole France declared cynically that if we begin with the assumption that men

are naturally good and virtuous we will surely end by wishing to kill them. To assert sentimentally that human nature is all lovable and trustworthy does not make it a fact, and lays itself open to disastrous reaction. Only religion, with its assertion of the worth of personality, can *create* the facts that support its faith. Love endureth all things and hopeth all things, because it believeth all things. We can see, for example, how such passionate faith acting on the assumption of the brotherhood of man proceeds to create it. Faith needs to be reënforced by love, or love needs to be fed by faith, before either can become robust enough to face the facts of life and recreate them. The religious ideal naturally declares what ought to be rather than what is, but it asserts that what ought to be can be.

Some look on the world of man as a spectacle, sitting on the side lines looking at the procession, seeking only to be amused at ab-

surdities and enjoying the human comedy. Others, who may see all that is called comic and absurd, spend themselves in the task of making it rational. A man may have earned the right to be a spectator, having done his work, and in the ripe wisdom of his last days looks at life, the cities and the ways of men, with tolerant and kindly eye. But the common mood of sitting in the critic's chair, viewing the scene with superior air, smiling with amused contempt at the antics of men, is cynical affectation. The cynic, one suspects, is only a disillusioned sensualist, a disappointed materialist. He is really a failure in the art of living.

XII

There are many implications of this great venture of faith in man, which is central to the Christian position. For example, everybody acknowledges that Christianity has abolished in principle all artificial barriers

between men. It asserts the fundamental ethical unity of the race. It pronounces that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. This faith carried in its bosom that which at long last put an end to slavery. It implies an end to war and to all sorts of social injustice. It is the only final sanction for democracy; for only faith in the value of man as man, only faith in the worth of the single soul, can keep alive the great democratic ideal. It has to contend with immemorial racial habits, as the Christian ideal of peace has to contend against an opposite faith which is rooted in age-old customs and practices. A recent article in an American magazine, which devoted the whole number to preparation for war, begins "For centuries man has pursued the great delusion that it was possible to eliminate war from the world." All through the article the word delusion is used to describe this ideal which has sprung up in the

hearts of men. It is a queer reading of history. Rather, the truth is that for centuries man has suffered from the delusion that war is inevitable and is somehow human. We are only now beginning to see that, whether natural or not, it is of anti-Christ, and that we cannot be of His company and defend it.

If we accept the great presupposition about man which lies back of the Christian position, we have before us an endless task and limitless adventure. We must learn to face some of the social principles and implications that follow, as for example the rights of children to sustenance, to education, to opportunity; and the rights of labour to a fair share of leisure and of the profits of their toil, to every safeguard for health. How far this implication goes no single man can determine, and the speed with which this Christianizing of industry should move is to some extent a matter of practical expediency. Some of the demands of labour now being

insistently made seem unanswerable, such as the right to organize, to state its case by its own representatives, and to share somehow in the control of their industry.

These and other rights that may be called the social programme of Christianity flow from the human values that arise from the religious presupposition. That presupposition implies moral equality of all sorts. This does not necessarily mean economic equality. Jesus, who fearlessly stated the high faith, saw how abject the destitution of wealth could be. He never believed that all problems would be solved if peace and plenty abounded. Indeed, our age, which has seen such amazing evidence of man's mastery of material forces for the production of goods, has its special temptations. If Emerson could say of his time that things were in the saddle and ride mankind, what added danger ours is. Strange as it may sound in an age when men are wresting the secrets of nature and

controlling the forces of nature, the very process threatens to subdue man to nature instead of nature to man. The things of the mind and the things of the soul are in danger of being engulfed by material interests. We have to get back the emphasis to the single soul, that we may conserve the very gains of true civilization. We have to think of the enrichment of character, the ethical meaning of each man's life both for himself and for society.

XIII

So our venture of faith may be made here as easily as elsewhere. Indeed, sooner or later it has to be made here. We may, if we will, adopt the dastard creed which believes the worst of man and is ready to link our race to all below it, never to anything above it. We can, therefore, use the phrase "human nature" to excuse anything ignoble and base. For all the follies and vices, for all the foul-

ness and shame that disgrace humanity we can be among the apologists who put it down to human nature. We can let our final position be determined and coloured by our judgment of origin, which assumes that nothing can be expected from a being with such a history.

Or we may make the other venture and say that is not human nature. That is from what it has emerged, a reversion to type, atavism—a throw-back to something primordial. So that baseness is a betrayal of human nature, not a necessity of it. The true nature of man lies in God's purpose for him, not in the evil that perverts that purpose. We may assume that man is a superior kind of animal fulfilling the laws of his animal nature, or we may put the emphasis on the moral and spiritual. We may judge man by his origin or his end, by process or purpose.

As for me, I will not go back for my final estimate merely to beginnings, but will look

also for ends. If you ask me what man essentially is I will not go for answer to the Garden of Eden, but to the Garden of Gethsemane, and will see man in the Son of Man.

Which is manhood—the heroism and nobility and sacrifice which have ever been possible for men, or the meanness and cruelty and foul loathsomeness of the annals of crime which our newspapers chronicle? When the engineer of a steamer went below to certain death to turn off steam and prevent an explosion that the hapless passengers might have a chance of escape, did he do an altogether *unnatural* thing? The Spartan mother sent her son to battle to come back with honour or on his shield: a modern mother poisoned her son for the insurance money—which is human nature? Both sides are human in that the noble and the base can be matched in human life, but which do we consider natural? This at least can be said as one of

the facts that when the case for the ideal is stated our heart assents; for

There is not a man
That lives who hath not known his God-like hours
And feels not what an empire we inherit.

XIV

The adventure, the choice, is inescapable, practically if not consciously. Those who cannot make up their minds about God—it has seemed such a purely speculative and theological question—can surely make their mind up about man. If they cannot decide about another life, they may about this life. What is man? What is this Adventurer who goes out to understand and use the world, to create even a human world? Besides the physical nature that connects him with the material around him, he has qualities, however they came and by whatever process, that seem to lift him out of the plane: Mind that

can enter into truth, that can think high thought; Conscience that can distinguish between higher and lower; Will that can choose the higher; Heart that can love the higher, love even the highest. Is it possible that he may be something more: Soul that lives for ever?

This faith, this idealism, this Christianity:

It may be false, but would you wish it true? Has it your vote to be so, if it can?

Would there be no volunteers for it, even if it were a forlorn hope? And when we see it to be the light of everything that lives in the world of man, the inspiration of every human triumph, we are committed to the adventure. I have asked more than once, What is America? I ask it again with a new note of interrogation. If it is merely a place where we can achieve ever more material prosperity, a place where human maggots can grow ever fatter, it will mean nothing for the world

in the end of the day. America is a great political adventure, dedicated to the incredible proposition that men are born equal. I know all the criticisms of that in fact and logic, but if America fails here she fails entirely. Christianity is a great spiritual adventure, dedicated to the incredible proposition that men are born sons of God. Has it our vote to be so if it can?

III

THE LAST ADVENTURE

O World, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, and had not chart,
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine
By which along the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.

—SANTAYANA.

I

IF TO be man is an adventure, there comes an end to it on the earthly scene where he plays his part. However long seems the day, the evening sets in and the longer dark. The time comes to all when the adventure of life as we know it is finished and we face an unknown future. We pass through many opening doors, into knowledge, into beauty, into love, and the fulness of life, and at last we stand before the last open door and look out into the dark. Does it usher us to a new and more thrilling adventure, or is it the end of the whole story? Like all other generations before us we peer into the unknown and wonder with Shakespeare,

> Whether 'tis ampler day divinelier lit
> Or homeless night without.

One obvious thing which distinguishes this last adventure from all others is that it is inevitable. We have no choice in the matter, and no alternatives are offered us. Other open doors we may refuse to enter, but not this one. The only choice we have is how we meet it, the mood in which we accept the inevitable. It is sometimes said that in a subject like this whose problem we have no sure means of solving, our attitude to it is of no importance. But we can and do assume a definite attitude to life, although we cannot solve all its problems. We cannot answer many of its questions, or even completely answer any of them, yet we know that the chief thing is our general attitude to life and not the measure in which we have found a solution for its enigmas. So with this last fact of earthly life, which is death, the thing of most importance is our attitude to it, and not that we have an answer to its problems. There is surely some practical difference

whether we look at death with dread and shrinking fear or with hope and glad expectation.

It is sometimes said also that the subject of immortality should not be discussed, because admittedly no certainty can be reached, however profound and prolonged we make the discussion. But on that basis there would be very little that we could discuss. We are compelled to get along without absolute certainty in anything. It is this quality that makes life, in every realm that it touches, an adventure, as we have seen in the previous lectures. Probability is even the guide of life, as Bishop Butler long ago showed. I once had a professor who allowed us students on occasion to heckle him on his subject. He would answer with great agility the questions which we fired at him, but there always came a place where he would say, "At this point, gentlemen, the whole subject runs up into a mystery." It got to be almost a game with us

to see when we could force him to make that admission. There comes a point in every subject when we are driven to the same admission. In practical decisions also the same is true, and nothing in human life could go on if we refused to act on what is merely probability. Our law courts might as well close their doors if no question were considered that could not reach certainty even from the standpoint of ordinary evidence.

Nobody denies that existence after death is possible, and after all the only practical question for us is whether it is probable. It would be an absurd contention to say that we will not even consider it because at best it is only probability. If, for example, we came to the conclusion that for good and sufficient reasons it is probable, ought not that to make an immense difference to life? The practical results to men are such that it becomes a natural theme for consideration and even for constant contemplation. The very hope of it

can quicken the blood and inspire men to great and long tasks. Assured faith in it can bring peace and comfort of heart, can purify passion, heighten motives, and deepen joy. A subject so far reaching in its effects on life, so fraught with meaning, the issue of which is so tremendous, does not need an apology for its serious consideration.

II

It is no real objection also that many seem to be able to do without thought of it at all, or even that some have no desire for it. Though the desire for immortality is so human that it may be said to be universal, yet there are some who express no wish for it and who welcome the thought of extinction. They gladly think of death as a sleep from which there is no waking, where all the ache of life is ended and all desire is killed. But we must not give too much weight to the fact that many are tired of life and would fain lie

down and sleep, or are indifferent to a future life and certainly have no appetite for it. Many men have no longing for knowledge, some have no passion for beauty, and others show no desire for a richer moral character. The fact that they have no appetite for art, or science, or religion does not make these realms cease to be. When Columbus set out on his immortal voyage many had no interest in the quest and cared nothing for its success or failure, but a new world lay across the sea all the same.

Perhaps none of us desires immortal life enough, or for the best reasons. Man after all is only a child not yet fully grown, and the higher faculties of intellect and spirit are undeveloped compared to the animal instincts. In all of us soul is buried in sense, and even with what powers we have we do not all come to maturity equally or in the same degree. Reason is common to man, but in some it seems only latent, so feebly does

it function. Music is a human endowment, but some find no delight in it and certainly show no interest. Justice is a deep instinctive passion of man's heart, yet in some it seems perverted or works as a very weak motive. So the instinct for eternal life may well be fundamentally human and yet be undeveloped in some. From the analogy of all other aptitudes of man we would expect just what we find.

The further objection may be made that it is a trite subject on which already everything possible has been said. Are there any new facts or new arguments for or against, any new lines of evidence? Does not discussion leave us precisely as we were, with never a new reason to think other than we did before? Why work over again the threadbare arguments? But we might say the same of every human subject. Yet each generation has to face the same old problems, and state them in the light of its own knowledge and

experience, and seek to solve them practically for its own life. The question of life after death never quite downs; it is kept alive by death. Age cannot wither nor custom stale the infinite variety with which death meets us. The fact that an experience is as old as humanity does not make it lose interest to us—rather the opposite. What made other ages ask the question is exactly what makes it asked by this age also. And here I am not attempting an exhaustive discussion of the subject nor a tracing of its history. I am merely suggesting a method of approach as part of the whole adventure of being man.

III

The question must be one of the oldest asked by the mind and heart of man. It was asked in its classic form in the Book of Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" It is a heart-searching question, touching the deepest doubt and the highest faith of the human

mind. Both the faith and the doubt are keener and larger than we would suppose from a surface observation of men. The faith seems instinctive, and the doubt seems as instinctive as the faith. There is no question which at times so reaches the quick. Faith in immortality lies at the bottom of all permanent peace of heart, and though we may evade the whole question or try to ignore it for a time, the day comes when we stand beside an open grave, and either the faith soars with eagle's wings or we bury our heart in the dust. We are laying our hand here on the absolute issues of life.

For one thing it is a plea for absolute seriousness and sincerity. Pascal wrote indignantly of unbelievers of his time for their flippancy and their airy way of speaking as if they were adding to the happiness of the world. When they spoke of the soul as if it were a little wind or smoke to be dissipated in thin air he exclaimed, "Is this a thing to

assert gaily, and not rather to say sadly as the saddest thing in all the world?" It is a great gain that at least we are past the flippancy of Pascal's time. Nobody parades denial with the jaunty air that used to be the fashion. Indeed this is the mournful undertone of some modern writing that men confess that denial here is like taking the sun out of heaven and making the earth soulless.

Now and again we do meet the flippant note still. Sir Arthur Keith, the English doctor, said recently that he did not regard eternal life as impossible but as undesirable. Nature's idea is to use the young and kill off the old, and old age is not a disease but merely the running down of the machine. The situation to him was like a crowded restaurant with so much accommodation, and if some sat at table too long others who were waiting could not eat. So the satisfied diners were hustled out to make room. Or it was like a cinema—English for a moving picture show

—with a continuous performance. You enter and see the show round, when you are supposed to come out. If you stay and see it a second time you will be bored, a third time you may go mad, and a fourth time you might well commit suicide. So, said Sir Arthur Keith, people who crave after human immortality do not really know what it means, or they would stop desiring it. He probably did not mean to be flippant, but he did not know how muddled he was in his reasoning. All that he says is beside the point. He is giving a very good argument for death. The man who has finished the full banquet of life, or has seen the garish show through to the end, should be ready for the exit. Age must retire, gracefully or not, in favour of youth. Only this renewal of life by the passing away of the old keeps the world moving. Progress and change would be blocked more than they are now if death did not intervene. But a good argument for death is no argu-

ment against life beyond death, unless one interprets all life in terms of materialism, as a machine that runs down.

IV

There are many ways of approaching the subject to the modern mind. It is common to start from a scientific basis and at least attempt to alleviate the problem. Many try this, because some of the present distress on this subject is due to the many facts which connect the higher life of man with the lower and mind with matter. Indeed, not so long ago in scientific circles it looked as if the prevailing idea was held that life could be explained from a material basis, and science seemed to be sounding the death knell to the immortal hopes of the race. But materialism as a philosophy has everywhere broken down. Even the science, which appeared to be taking from us our glorious hopes, when it comes closer to its own subject, opens up new doors.

If spirit is mysterious, it cannot be more mysterious than matter is seen to be. Indeed, we now know too much about matter to be materialists of the old crude type. At the same time it seems to me that scientific proof is impossible from the nature of the case.

Life after death cannot be disproved by science, but neither can it be proved. It is true that there are scientists, some of them distinguished, who believe that there is or may be evidence to prove that the dead can communicate with the living. Some even declare that already they possess a mass of facts which demonstrate the survival of the soul. Now by that they evidently mean scientific demonstration, the kind of proof which would convince men of science in any other line of inquiry. It is certain that they have not yet done that, and while it would be worse than foolish to assert dogmatically that they will never do it, it is not at all likely that it can be done along the lines of their present

inquiry. As a matter of fact such a subject as immortality is outside the sphere of science, which deals with the phenomena of experience. Our faculties are not such that we can have contact of this demonstrable scientific sort with a world where matter plays no part.

It is not, as used to be confidently said, that science cannot and must not deal with the unseen. It is a fact that she constantly does. The whole new realm of the electron is an unseen world, and science speculates about it and pronounces on it. Ether is unseen and cannot be appreciated by any of our senses, yet science does not hesitate to speak about ether and form theories with it. Indeed, both electron and ether may be said to be only hypotheses imagined by science to account for phenomena. And I suppose if there were facts which could not be otherwise accounted for than as the result of action from a world of departed spirits, candid

science would be compelled to accept that. But there are no such facts, at least in such number and of such sort as has convinced rigorous scientific minds.

Yet there are things which science has to say or has said worth considering in connection with this whole subject. They are chiefly along the line of giving a suitable natural setting for the whole human drama as the adventure of being man. One is the whole evolutionary process which science holds to be proved. Science has given new dimensions for both the past and the future of man. It has unfolded a process of almost inconceivable grandeur, as the whole creation has groaned and travailed upward until now. We look back through all the darkness of the past, and see a track of light made by some vast unfathomable purpose which we dimly trace but must surely trust. We look around and out into the darkness of the future and see the same track of light where that purpose ful-

fils itself. Man has been led on and up, from such a far way, by such hazardous paths, through such struggle and suffering, to such triumphs as compel us to believe it cannot be all in vain at the last. Only some glorious future can justify such expenditure. Can it cease now, without turning it all into ironic and tragic farce? Was it all for nothing and to go no farther, that life has come so far?

It may be said that the process is justified by the progress of the race, though all single souls wither and disappear. It may even seem a high motive to give self to some large vague end for mankind in the mass. We may, with George Eliot, think it enough to join the choir invisible of those immortal dead who live again in minds made better by their presence. But however noble such a sentiment is, as expressing a true ideal of service, it is futile to speak of it as immortality in any sense. Personality stripped of any kind of

self-consciousness has really ceased to be. Besides, it is science that has pronounced the doom of the human race. It points to a time, however distant, when this planet will roll through space cold and silent and dead. And all man's order and civilization and life must disappear, and man's world be as if it had never been. So impressive is this sense of ultimate futility that Darwin declared, "It is an intolerable thought that man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such long-continued, slow progress."

There are other aspects and even doctrines of science which create an atmosphere congenial to faith in immortality, such as what used to be called the law of the conservation of energy. Can it fail here without ceasing to be law? Human personality represents force as truly as any physical power of nature can be. Even matter, though it may be changed, cannot be destroyed. How can the soul of

man escape out of the universe? If all that is implied in what we call personality and character be in any sense reality, can they be dissipated into nothingness? There are other aspects of science which are sympathetic to the point of view favouring the persistence of life, so much so that it looks as if scientists would proclaim its probability should theologians desert it.

But to my mind any scientific doctrines or lines of proof can only be subsidiary at the best. All that scientific analogies can do is to show that there is no abstract impossibility of the soul surviving the shock of death. A man who demands what he calls scientific evidence, by which he means the sort of demonstration which proves a material fact, can have nothing whatever of religion proved to him. From the very nature of the case such proof is impossible. The only trustworthy scientific proof of that sort of a future state would be, as Mozley pointed out, to have

found it out by actual experience by having died and actually passed into that state and felt one's self in it—a proof which in the nature of the case we cannot have now. The real truth is that scientific men when they are religious are so in the same way and for the same reasons as other men, and not because their intellect is convinced by a new scientific argument.

After the death of Pasteur's little daughter, Sainte-Beuve happened to write to him to ask his aid for a friend who was a candidate for the Académie des Sciences. This man was a Positivist, and Sainte-Beuve in his letter hoped that Pasteur would not let the difference of religious opinions bias him. Pasteur in reply declared that for a scientific post he did not trouble about a candidate's philosophical school, and then declared, "My philosophy is of the heart not of the mind, and I give myself up to those feelings about eternity which come natural at the bedside

of a cherished child drawing its last breath. At those supreme moments there is something in the depths of our souls which tells us that the world may be more than a mere combination of phenomena proper to a mechanical equilibrium brought out of chaos of the elements simply through the gradual action of the forces of matter." His biographer goes on to remark that the something in the depths of our soul of which Pasteur spoke in his letter to Sainte-Beuve was often perceived in his ordinary conversation. "Absorbed as he was in his daily task, he yet carried in himself a constant aspiration toward the Ideal, a deep conviction of the reality of the Infinite, and a trustful acquiescence in the Mystery of the universe." That is only an abstract way of saying that he was a profoundly religious man. His piety and faith were not scientific but religious attainments, arrived at in the same way as by all other religious men.

V

There are others who approach the subject intellectually by way of philosophy, not by way of science. They are impressed by the facts of consciousness, which to them are more important when dealing with a being like man than any facts of outward happening. The fact of personality, for example, can be made a most powerful and to many minds an absolutely convincing argument. The kind of argument that certain philosophers used to make does not help us much, as for example Leibnitz's contention that the ego being a principle of unity is incapable of dissolution. Modern psychology makes that language seem very archaic. But many men other than philosophers feel that all that goes to make up the whole personality demands a fate other than extinction. Human instincts and intuitions, affections and emo-

tions, reason and will, represent facts as significant as any facts of nature.

Then there are the moral arguments which carry much weight to some. There is the disparity between man's moral nature and the facts of life, the old problem of Job and some of the Psalms of the suffering of the good and the success of the bad—"right for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne." Men have felt the need for a future to redress the inequalities of life and satisfy man's deep passion for justice. However it came that justice arose in the hot heart of man and however he acquired his moral sense, he cannot easily accept the conclusion that the world ends in ultimate moral chaos. Is there never to be harmony between what is and what he feels ought to be?

Besides the desire for justice there are other qualities of human nature which never seem to reach adequate satisfaction or full fruition. Everywhere in man's nature there

is imperfection, incompletion, failure to realize the dream.

Why do we ache for white-winged loveliness,
God, if our lives must stick in sleazy mud?

Man searches for truth, and he is like a child picking up pebbles on the shore while the great sea of truth is unplumbed. He follows after beauty which is ever out of reach. He knows goodness, but it is as if he had fallen in love with a star. There is a universal longing for a truer and deeper happiness, for some permanent satisfaction of instinct and desire, it may be the desire for holiness here so dwarfed and hindered. This has often been represented as only selfish wishing, but that is really to play with words. The man who loves and wants to be allowed to go on loving, the man who seeks goodness and asks to be permitted to go on doing and becoming good, is not displaying selfishness, but is fulfilling the highest desires of the soul.

VI

Thus we may deal with this great subject from many standpoints, but we are not building on the rock till we rest our argument on the facts of our spiritual nature. These are the facts which encourage us to push the great adventure further and make the religious presupposition. It is not science, nor philosophy, nor even ethics which gives courage and faith for the last adventure and leaps over the gulf. It is religion that calmly asserts the great conviction, and proceeds to use it as a mighty moral motive. Religious faith throws itself in a great venture on an unseen spiritual order for man's whole life, and its last venture is that man is made for life eternal.

There has sometimes been a tendency in dealing with Christian evidences to associate the belief in immortality exclusively with the Christian faith, with a mistaken notion of

thereby adding to its distinction. It has plenty of distinction without any exaggeration or unreal glory. Christianity has filled out the belief with spiritual contents, and given it certitude, and added to it moral power, but faith in some sort of immortality has been practically universal. The earth is cluttered with witnesses in tombs and relics of all sorts from the dawn of history—from the cave of Neanderthal man to the pyramids of Egypt, from the prehistoric cairns of Scotland to the mausoleums and burial practices of to-day. The faith is a heritage not merely from the great religions, but from the great human tradition. It is the instinctive demand of the human heart and the instinctive demand of all religious faith.

It has been common even to point the distinction between the Old Testament and the New by denying to the Old Testament any such faith. But nowhere in it is death looked upon as annihilation. There is no thought

that there will be an end of personal existence, though the hereafter is dark and gloomy. It is a shadowy and feeble picture we get, except in the personal faith of psalmists, who feel so related to God and enjoy such close communion that they cannot imagine themselves cut off from it. Death was there, inevitable, universal, and there was no certain light on the future; but the living faith of the pious heart defied death not by reasoning or argument but by falling back on that spiritual communion which was theirs.

Jesus interprets the essence of Old Testament faith by the words, "I am the God of Abraham. Now God is not the God of the dead but of the living." He implies that immortality, the hope of it, the faith in it, was not something unknown before He spoke. He made it the possession of man in a way it never was before, enriched the hope of it, deepening the faith in it, giving it spiritual

contents, and making it a driving motive in moral life.

We have seen that there is no line of proof which can demonstrate the future life by syllogisms. It must be part of our general faith, and part of the whole attitude we take in our great venture on the world and life. To a religious man it is simply part of his faith in the nature and character of God. It has ever been so. The Old Testament saints reached their measure of assurance through their knowledge of spiritual communion. They could not believe that the communion they enjoyed could terminate with death, and so, though they had no clear revelation, their faith made its magnificent venture and leaped over the chasm. That spiritual fellowship had in it the seeds of eternity. They did not know how it was to be managed, but when they came straight up to the darkness they knew they could safely leave their future with God. One, who declares that he had none in

heaven or on earth that he desired beside God and knew that he was continually with Him, was driven to the same high faith that it could not be all for nothing that he had been given this spiritual communion—"My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

To such an experience it is intellectually inconceivable that personality can be annihilated, with all that personality means of consciousness and will and character, if personality is an end in the cosmic process. And it is morally inconceivable, if we have any worthy conception of the moral nature of God. Certainly we cannot believe in benevolence, to say nothing of a God who is Father of our spirits who has implanted in us the best we are of pity and love and justice and truth, still less in One who is perfect love, and at the same time deny immortality. The servant is not greater than his Master; the creature is not nobler than the Creator.

Man cannot be simply the child of time, if he stands to the eternal mystery in the relation which Jesus asserted. Thus we come to faith in a future life, not by a process of reasoning on so-called scientific analogies, but by accepting the Christian teaching of the relation in which man stands to God.

VII

This further narrows the question down to our view of the essential features of human nature. If a man die, shall he live again? It depends on what we mean by man. Every living thing is subject to the law of mortality. There is, it is true, in every recurring spring a rebirth, but not for the individual. Life in all its forms is tenacious and enduring, but not for the single life. Is man so inherently great, even so exceptional, that a different measure is meted out to him than to all other natural existence? This cannot be discovered by microscope, or crucible, or test tube, or all

the instruments of the laboratory. In the last issue it becomes a matter of faith in spiritual values, and the only test of that faith is whether it finds support in facts and whether it produces results in life.

If we have a mean conception of our own real nature, immortality is an "illusion of grandeur" like that to be found in a madhouse. If we could only use Hamlet's words in bitter irony about man, this beauty of the world, as noble in reason and infinite in faculty, in form and moving express and admirable, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a God—if really we are in no sense any of these things, then we may smile in pity at man fancying himself a candidate for special treatment from nature. If all our moral and spiritual intuitions be only silly dreams and all our moral and spiritual history be illusion, we may well acquiesce in the doom of extinction. Such a pitiful being is worthy of nothing else. What other fate

could there be for ephemeræ bred from the dung heap of the earth to flaunt in the brief brightness of a day, to pass off at night? Man, though paragon of animals, must expect only the lot of an animal.

What may be said of man if he be something more? He may face the last adventure in another mood, if man take himself as spiritual, with his ideals and emotions and aspirations and all the high possibilities of character and intellect and even holiness. He knows the constant sting of desire for infinite things, craving for knowledge, beauty, love, even hunger and thirst after righteousness. What a sorry scheme of things it all is if it succeeds in creating in man capacities doomed ever to ultimate failure, endowing him with memory and imagination, opening vistas of thought and wonder, enticing him to the long search for truth, quickening in him keenest sensibilities, dowering his heart with the love of love, even luring him with the

vision splendid of spiritual communion with the Eternal—all to end in mockery and despair.

In the last issue our view of human destiny depends on our theory of human nature. A future life becomes probable or improbable according as we make our venture of faith on the nature of man. A judgment of value has to be made some time, in addition to any careful investigation of origin or of history. Of the physical world man is a part. He takes his place in the order of nature. His body can be resolved into the usual ordinary material elements, and it obeys the laws that govern the universe. As part of nature man is an infinitesimal speck of no importance compared to the whole.

But in the realm of value the opposite is the case. The physical world is only a part of experience. Here we create the only value, and in that respect are greater than the world. We may not assume, as Plato did, that value

is the essence of reality, but for practical purpose we can and do build up a human world. Religion may be said to be faith in the supremacy of value. Even belief in God is the conviction that moral worth reigns in the universe.

In man, who is a part of nature, it can be said that nature finds itself. In man nature finds worth and meaning, and it may be purpose. He is the crown of nature, without which nature would seem to be decapitated. This is the justification for the religious claim that for her purpose the world is the arena where man becomes man, even the place where he is trained and disciplined into character and personality. We demand immortality because we want to see value crowned, because we refuse to believe that it can be ultimately frustrated. We cannot believe in immortality unless we give values to life. When we give life its highest value a future life becomes easily credible. We

merely trust the soul's invincible surmise once again, as we have done before. It is only one more venture that our deepest instincts do not play us false.

VIII

As a matter of fact it is by this way of higher values that all profound assurance comes to us. Recently I received a letter from a man who said he had reached the point where he might be classed as old. He was born and reared in one of the strictest religious sects, whose doctrines he had accepted without question. Bit by bit the doctrines had lost authority, and everything he once believed was shaken with uncertainty, while the hunger for assurance continued. A beloved sister died, and it revived his feelings about his mother's death long before. He thought of these two characters so beautiful and gracious, and of their lives so rich in love and sacrifice and service. He thought also of his

feelings before the work of some creator of music or of beauty. He could not reconcile himself to the thought of extinction for all that was so lovely in human nature as in these two women, or for one who was a creator of a world of beauty and harmony. He wanted to know if he might base his religious faith on these overwhelming convictions, instead of the dogmatic religion which had crumbled. I need not say how I answered.

In no other way do we get real assurance about anything religious except by such inward conviction. Especially here, when we deal with a future utterly unknown, there is nothing to trust except these inner promptings of the soul. Only as we put real values to character and personality and life can we have any ground for firm confidence in a venture like that of immortality. When we value human nature for such moral qualities as courage and patience and selfless love, we cannot believe that all that grace and beauty

and nobleness of character can cease to be. It was the same sort of conviction that added weight to the faith of the Apostles about Jesus—"it was not possible that He could be holden of death."[1]

IX

Here, as in the whole region of the venture of faith, the trouble is that we do not make a real venture, and do not take all the risk. We hold it as a pious opinion, or an intellectual speculation, not as faith. This is as true of one who professes to deny it, as of one who accepts it. Neither completely acts on the full implication of his position. It is hard to say what would happen if a man lived out to the utmost his denial of a possible immortality. It would not follow that he must lose all fidelity to high ideals and slip down to lower moral living—"Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." If he were heroic minded,

[1] Acts of the Apostles, 2:24.

he might make it a call to a stoical adherence to the best he knows and fall back on his indomitable soul. But no such individual case can blind us to the general weakening of sanctions and lowering of standards that would be natural. As Emerson wrote, "No sooner do we try to get rid of the idea of immortality than pessimism raises its head. Human griefs seem little worth assuaging. The affections die away, die of their own conscious feebleness and uselessness. A moral paralysis creeps over us."

On the other hand it is hard to estimate what an actual living in the power of endless life might result in. It is true that the charge of "otherworldliness" has been made, and rightly made, against some religion. The charge is that men can be so obsessed by thought of the world to come that this world is despised and neglected. The affairs of the present are so trivial and petty compared to eternity that thought of the future takes the

heart out of any effort. Better be frankly secular and go out to make the best of this world than live in idle dreams of a world to come. The objection sometimes made by the party of reform and by men keenly interested in material progress is that religion puts the emphasis on the future life, and in the interests of the soul contemns worldly conditions and so impedes progress. Religious faith robs the present of its full power by looking forward to a visionary future. It despises the ordinary life with its pleasure and occupations, and depreciates the active sphere in which men must live, since it makes spiritual contemplation its ideal. It does not love this world, and therefore does not make the best of it.

It might be answered to this charge that as a matter of fact it is not so on the whole. The men who have been the world's best benefactors, who have spent themselves for others, who have given the impulse to all re-

form, who have died for the good of their fellows, have been precisely men who lived in the power of the world to come. But it must be confessed that the charge has received plausibility from the conduct of some who have, in the name of religion, washed their hands of the temporal concerns of the great mass of men. This can only be when religion is falsely viewed, or at least imperfectly interpreted. It is when religion is thought of mainly as a way of escape, or a plan of safety, that a future paradise becomes the ideal, making it natural for men to endure injustice and acquiesce in the miseries of the earth. When religion is seen to be in its very essence the adventure of the soul this point of view becomes impossible.

Even so, we rarely make our venture complete and wholehearted and live in the power of endless life. If we did and used the motive to the utmost, it would change the world. There is nothing which separates us from the

early Church more than the contrast between our mood of gentle melancholy as representative of the Christian spirit and their jubilant victorious tone. In all these things they are more than conquerors, they said. There is no gloom or despondency in the Epistles, even when the problems are stubborn and the struggle is fierce. Nowhere is the contrast more marked than in the grip of eternal life the early Church had. It would be easy to analyze the causes that produce in our day the prevalent mood, some intellectual, as we have seen, some practical and moral. But the fact remains that we have lost some of the assurance and are robbed of the joy. If the faith were made a real venture by us, it would introduce into life a tremendous moral motive.

X

The need of some such motive is obvious to add dignity to life, and to make it worth

while to plan for far ends. Bernard Shaw in *Back to Methuselah* makes this the plot of the play. We have to die just about when we have learned to live. Life is far too short for men to bother laying foundations for a fitting structure. The result is that we fritter away most of what little we have. We need to have at least three hundred years to make it worth while. The political and social problems raised by our civilization are too vast and complicated to be solved by mere human mushrooms, who decay and die just as they begin to have a glimmer of the wisdom and knowledge needed for their own government. Our statesmen and leaders are so immature and inexperienced, and yet they are called on to control forces so gigantic that one shudders at the thought of their being entrusted to such folly. They are so futile and know so little that they are like flies on a wheel pluming themselves on driving the machine. Threescore years and ten might be

long enough for a crude village life but are certainly not long enough for a complicated civilization like ours. Men must will to live at least three hundred years to make it worth living at all. As it is, life is so short that men do not take it seriously. We muddle along with imperfect institutions because they will last our time, as we say.

Shaw's argument is not meant for a joke, but is a very serious and true one. If life were longer, men could afford to make themselves masters of a subject, could lay plans for long efforts. The possible human tasks which even we see before us are beyond human capacity. Our material resources have piled up out of all proportion to our intellectual and moral reserves. What men, for example, are fit to handle the instruments of destruction that lie to the hand of man? Our incompetent statesmen could easily wreck the civilization of the world. We all naturally take short views and are content to make things do and

muddle through for the moment. It was a king with the care of a nation on his heart who said, Let there be peace in my time. Most of us would be satisfied with that, and our time is so short.

What Bernard Shaw wants is a motive big enough to compel men to stretch their powers to the uttermost and make man's existence on the earth the noble and fine thing it might be. For this purpose it is necessary, he thinks, that the term of human life must be extended to at least three centuries. There is no doubt that such a possibility would do something to remedy some of the defects he sees. It would certainly suggest a motive for more serious preparation for actual living, and might well improve the quality of our purposes. Even the seemingly inveterate trifler might be appalled at the idea of trifling for three hundred years. There would be a driving power in the knowledge of our expanded span that should push human life to

higher levels and make us willing to make present sacrifices for future good. There might easily be a more serious outlook and more worthy ambitions and a finer type of life, if men believed that they would live for three centuries. It does not seem to strike Mr. Shaw that it would be a far more effective motive for noble life and for a noble society on earth if men believed that they would live forever.

The trouble is that even when we believe this, we do not throw the whole weight of our life on the venture. From the dynamic conception of the world and life that this faith really implies we ever draw back to a static state. The thought of eternal life tires us sometimes, because we think of the same thing happening all the time. We do not think of perfection as *process,* and yet we know how we would revolt against even a heaven that meant a continuation of any state *ad infinitum,* as we revolt against boredom.

A mere extension of time would be nothing, which explains Sir Arthur Keith's nausea at eternal life as occupying a restaurant table or watching a continuous movie show over and over.

Only the filling up of the doctrine with content—and that is one of the tasks of religion—can make the faith a moral motive. It must be an advance, a moral elevation in the scale of life lifting it to a different level. Mere duration of time cannot do much even to impress us. We must look on immortality as affording scope for progressive development, the carrying forward of all that is in us at present as mere potentiality, the fruition of all our rudimentary capacities, growth and ever more growth. The power of endless life is the power of endless growth.

XI

It is not a mere imagination that great results would follow from such a faith; for

it has been seen in some measure on the earth before. In the New Testament, though it was hampered by being entangled with a catastrophic view which expected the end of the world in their lifetime, we see the glory this faith cast on human life, letting in the light and power of the world to come. This present life was seen to be critical and decisive, making destiny for a man, but it was only a little section of life. We cannot overestimate the power it meant in life and thought for moral transformation, giving to common men a sudden widening of horizon, a revolution of their whole view. Even affliction seemed to be light when it was seen to be but for a moment. Believers in immortality could look at life *sub specie æternitatis,* and learned to put the things of this world in true perspective. It could and did make all life nobler and richer, as also it shaped and coloured all Christian ethics. Ordinary ambitions and selfish pleasures and sinful indulgences are

seen in this light to be poor and tawdry and mean, not worth a man's thought. "The fashion of this world passeth away"—that settled many a question practically. We can see how this would change the whole estimate of life, and how it would bring, as it did, a great moral hope into the lives of slaves and outcasts, restoring them to the dignity of true manhood.

If this is too great a venture to be asked to make, the question arises whether the other ventures by which man has become man can be ultimately justified. They all seem to hang together and be of a piece. We know that an ignoble view of man will sooner or later reflect itself on life. It is a principle of psychology and of education that man responds to faith in him. We become what we think we are. If we refuse to make the venture of faith, a blight falls on our best faculties. No one can give us faith; we have to achieve it. It is a *dare*—the will to act on the hazard.

The world, life, God, and now life eternal come as a challenge to the soul of man. We conceive the universe as one in which moral aspiration and spiritual activity are at home. We make the venture that this is so. Man's character is made in and by the venture. We make the further venture that man's destiny is commensurate with man's character. We see him to be at bottom an adventurer in search of eternal worth. He asks to be permitted to seek it eternally. If we trust the soul's invincible surmise, we can go calmly to the human task, living and working in the power of endless life.

THE END

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